

# CHRIST'S METHOD OF PRAYER

E. L. STRONG, M.A.

*Member of the Oxford Mission Brotherhood of the Epiphany*

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## PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to explain the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ about prayer, and especially the method he gave to his disciples on which their whole system of prayer was to be based, in order that we in our day may be helped by it to delight in prayer and to pray better.

The book is intended (i) for those who have either given up habitual prayer almost entirely or have been content with saying a few formal prayers morning and evening, and who only pray from their hearts when they want something for themselves very badly, or desire that a great danger may be averted from one whom they love, or in some such emergency.

(ii) For those who, though they do pray often and earnestly, yet embrace a very small circle of people in their prayer, and are not much conscious of their union with and responsibility for mankind in general, or in particular for the bad sinners, the suffering, the outcast, the lost whom Christ specially seeks to save.

(iii) For those who believe that Christ has called them to devote themselves to his special service—as for example missionaries—and who are trying to obey his call.

Christ is calling all of us because we are Christians, whether we are conscious of his call or not, to live in union with himself, so that we can manifest his love among our fellow men. He desires that we all may be in a condition resembling that of his first disciples, so

that he may be able to say to us also, 'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.'

That they might be able to fulfil their vocation he imparted to them his own life, as he imparts it to us in Baptism, and he enabled them constantly to feed on him and live by him, as he enables us, chiefly through the great Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.<sup>1</sup> But receiving food, physical or spiritual, and assimilating it, are two different things. That they, and we, might assimilate his life, live by it and manifest it, he gave them and us as the chief means for this a system of prayer which is summed up in the Lord's Prayer. And the aim of this book is to explain this system and show how it is the chief means by which we on our part make Christ's life our own and so become Christlike.

His life on earth was a twofold life—of devotion to God and to his fellow men for God's sake. The history of the Christian Church shows that Christians have in all ages found it very difficult to imitate this twofold life, or even to realize that the ideal life is of such a kind. They have tried to imitate one part or the other, rather than both in combination. In the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic ages Christians did on the whole live this twofold life of devotion to God and to their fellows. But for some centuries after that the most religious people aimed almost exclusively at the former part of it, while the eager Christians of modern times aim almost exclusively at the latter; so that, while they in their great desire to live in communion with God often forgot the needs of their fellow men, we are so

<sup>1</sup> S. John 8: 57.

anxious to supply their needs that we are apt to forget God and live for the most part without him.

We can give great thanks to God for the spirit of service which is being manifested in our age in such a variety of ways. There never was an age—this could be said even during the war—when men and women in general had so much enthusiasm for the service of their fellow men as they have now. But while we rejoice in this and see in it a great advance of the kingdom of Christ on earth, we have to confess that much of it is ill-regulated enthusiasm—that of people who are in much the same condition as S. Peter's before his fall, when he thought he was quite equal to any task that might be given him, and had yet to learn the one all-important lesson that without Christ he could do nothing which was of lasting value for the kingdom of God. The truth we all need to remember is that Christ is the King of the kingdom of heaven; that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in him—all the perfect plans for the regeneration of the whole human race; that he is longing to impart this wisdom and make known his plans and to give strength for carrying them out to those who will live in union with him. It is evident to us all, when we think of it, that one month's work in union with Jesus Christ would be worth more than the work of years of one who was not living in union with him, but was merely carrying out his own plans. And, thank God, we can say now that very many people *are* thinking of it, for the tide is beginning to turn again in the Christian Church towards the desire for more prayer. There are evidences of this in most of the serious literature of the day. We are beginning to realize that the plans for the reform of the human

race, or any section of it, are of little use if they come merely from the brains of philanthropists. We are beginning to try to discover what Christ's plans are, and to go to him for the strength to fulfil them. It is hoped that this small book may help some of us to do this effectively.

It is quite certain that if we will pray habitually in accordance with our Lord's method, our hearts will become more and more filled with love for God and devotion to his service; we shall also become far more devoted to the service of our fellow men, which is only another aspect of devotion to God, and we shall rise surely and steadily above the temptations to wrong self-love, to the horrible selfishness which so constantly besets us. We shall, in a word, become not merely *saved*, but *saviours* of mankind. And in all our best moments we long to be this. We see the world torn by strife and hatred; the bodies and souls of men and women being destroyed by greed and lust; children growing up in an atmosphere of deadly evil. We see also, through many splendid examples, what they all might be if they had more opportunity of knowing Christ. We see his power to save and raise the worst sinners from the mire, to ennoble the most unlikely people, manifested on every side. And we long to do what we can to bring this power of his to bear on those who are still lost in sin and darkness, in other words, to bring them to a knowledge of him and of his love. What more wonderful vocation could there be than this? What more glorious way of spending the one life that each of us has? And we can all spend our lives thus in God's service; not only so, but we shall long to do so, if we will pray as Christ taught us and persevere



in such prayer in spite of all the difficulties and temptations that are in the way of it.

It may be that some who have only been accustomed to say a very few prayers each day will think that the method of prayer here described cannot be meant for them and that they have no time for it. But this is not true. Christ's teaching about prayer is for all his disciples, not only for those who have much time for prayer. We should all try to pray according to his method even if we have only very little time to spend in it. And it is safe to prophesy that those who do so will soon desire, and find themselves able, to devote more time to it, probably much more time; while those whose lives are specially dedicated to God's service will see with ever-increasing clearness that if they are to fulfil their vocation they *must* devote more time to prayer, however pressing their other duties appear to be.

May our Lord pour out his Spirit upon us from on high, giving us wisdom to understand what his way for us is, and strength to walk in it and not faint.

'O turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.'

In place of the Appendix which was at the end of this book in former editions, containing a list of subjects for prayer for each day of the week, the following excellent little books of intercession are recommended: (i) *Prayers for Common Use* (published at the office of U.M.C.A., 85 Great Peter Street, London; S.W.1); (ii) *Sursum Corda*, by Dr. W. H. Frere and A. L. Illingworth (Mowbray & Co.).

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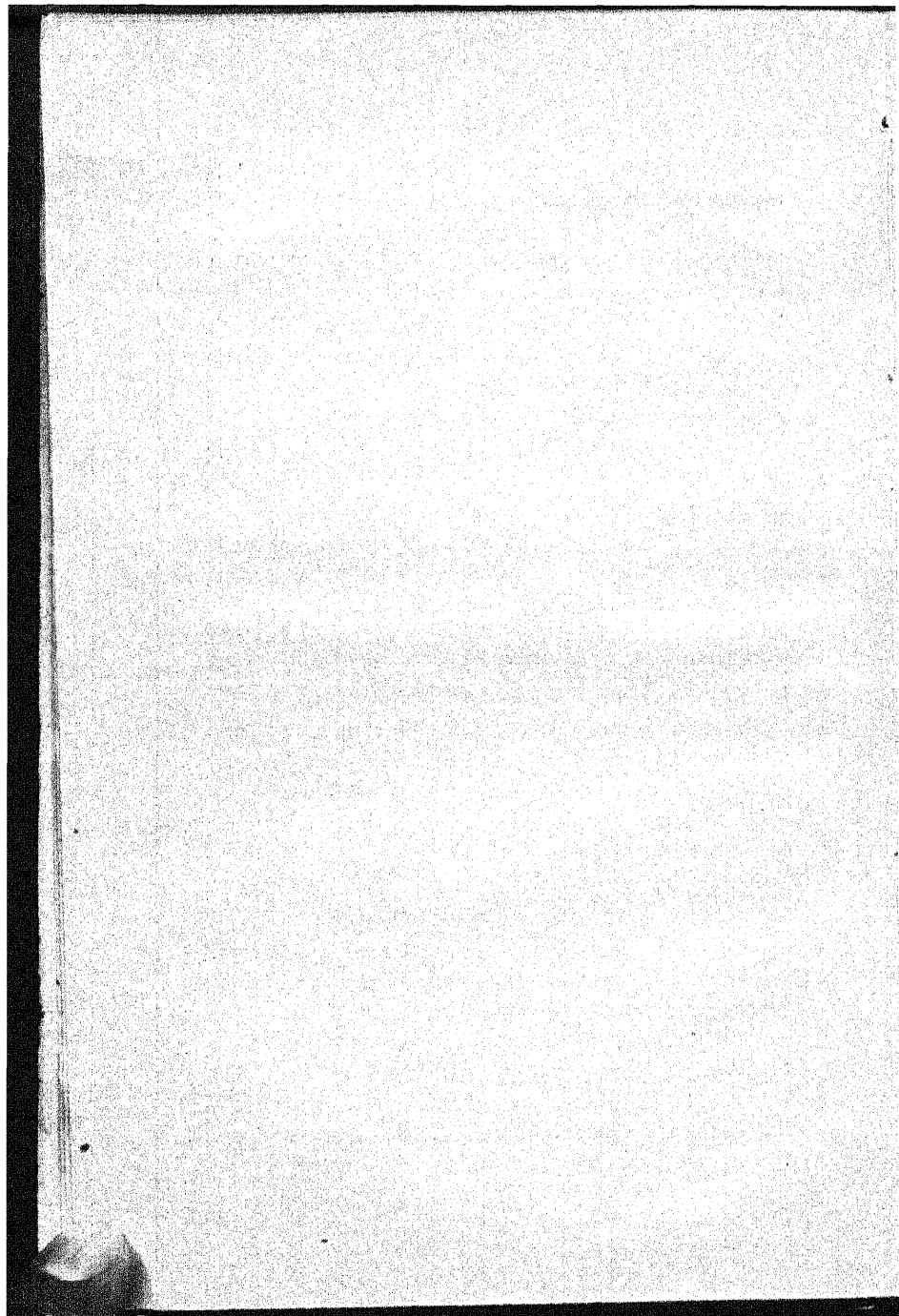
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## CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. A LIFE OF COMMUNION WITH CHRIST ...	1
II. THE OBJECT OF PRAYER ...	13
III. WHY IS PRAYER SO DIFFICULT? ...	24
IV. PRAYING TO OUR FATHER IN SECRET ...	30
V. PRAYING AFTER THE MANNER OF THE LORD'S PRAYER ...	37
VI. PRAYING AFTER THE MANNER OF THE LORD'S PRAYER ( <i>continued</i> ) ...	48
VII. DIFFICULTIES CONSIDERED ...	57



## CHAPTER I

### A LIFE OF COMMUNION WITH CHRIST

THOSE who study the teaching which Christ gave concerning prayer, both by word and by his own example, sooner or later become aware of a fact which, in view of the usual practice of most of us who profess to follow him, is a very startling one, namely, that he taught his disciples that, if they would follow him and do his will, prayer must be considered as the main work of their lives, that which was to make the most demand on their hearts and minds. But though this teaching of Christ, as it is presented in the Gospels, is so plain, the majority even of those who desire to be his disciples and to work for him according to his will do not follow it. Prayer in their lives is rather a series of incidents than their main work. They pray when they can find time to do so in the midst of other occupations which seem to them the real business of their lives. It seems therefore necessary, when we are considering how to pray in accordance with our Lord's teaching, to begin with this aspect of it. Our minds can perhaps be focussed on it best if we examine the teaching which is recorded in the fifteenth chapter of S. John's Gospel, for that can be said to sum it all up.

'Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine,

ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples.<sup>1</sup>

'Abide in me, and I in you;' that is, live habitually in such a way that you may abide in me and I may abide in you. The possibility suggested by the words is strange and startling to our minds at first. But our Lord can trust us to understand what he means because of the experience we have of living with one another. Even if we do not ourselves know (though we probably do) what it is to 'abide in' some relation or friend and to be conscious that he is abiding in us, we have all known or heard of many people who have such experience. We have seen husbands and wives, parents and children, brethren or sisters in communities, or friends in ordinary life, so bound together that each could be said to 'abide in' the other, and to be unable to think of life apart from him or her. The thoughts of each flowed readily into the mind of the other, and their hearts beat in unison. Our Lord must have meant that his union with us and ours with him could and ought to be like in kind to these unions which exist among men, while it greatly surpassed them all in strength and affection. For he goes on to say that it is to be as close as that between the branches of a vine and the vine; so close, he means, that all the strength

<sup>1</sup> S. John 15: 4-8.

and inspiration we need for our work for him is to flow to us constantly from him, and that it can come to us from no other source. 'Apart from me,' he says, 'ye can do nothing'; nothing, that is, which is of use for the fulfilling of his purposes. On the other hand, 'He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit. . . . If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples.'

For us, then, who desire to bring forth fruit—to help Christ in his work of regenerating all mankind—it is of the utmost importance that we should understand how this close union with him is to be maintained. Christ on his side does all that is possible in order that his union with us may be perfect. This goes without saying, since he is love, and therefore desires not only to have us always with him, but also that we may be instruments as perfect as possible for his redeeming work. He is always with us, ready to reveal his purposes that we may know what work we are meant to do; ready to fill us with his life in order that we may do it as well as possible. What is it necessary for us to do in order that our union with him may be what he desires it to be?

Our Lord himself answered this question in the main by giving us the Lord's Prayer. For, as we shall try to see, when he has guided and persuaded us to pray habitually in accordance with this model prayer, then we are using the most effective means of all for filling our hearts with love of him and the longing to do his will, with love therefore for our neighbour also: which twofold love transforms our self-love, purifies and

ennobles our whole being, and causes us to live, in union with Christ, the same kind of life that he lived on earth and now lives in heaven.

The majority of those who work for him, however, appear to consider, and many even say, that such union can be maintained, even if they very rarely hold conscious communion with him. To work for him in any way, they say, is to be in communion with him: *Laborare est orare*. Therefore they suppose that if they are engaged in hard work for him and his people all day long, and can only spare a few minutes every now and then for quiet and prayer, he will be pleased and will consider that they are serving him better thus than if they spent more time with him and consequently less with other people.

That sounds so plausible to so many people that it seems necessary to point out at some length that our Lord's own example, which shows us better than any words could do what abiding in him means, altogether condemns it and shows it to be nothing better than a subtle form of temptation.

For, consider what our Lord's example is. He was sent to accomplish the salvation of the human race, and thus to fulfil his Father's will. He had to do this through our human nature, which he took and made his own. The human will had hitherto been overcome by evil; it must therefore be enabled to overcome evil and do the Father's will instead of its own.

What steps did our Lord take for bringing his human will into obedience to his Father's so that he might accomplish the Father's whole purpose for man? This is shown very clearly by the evangelists. He spent his human life till he was about thirty years of age in his



home at Nazareth, without beginning to teach or work among men. We can gather from the only incident of his youth which is recorded, as well as from the rest of his life, that the main purpose of this long period of quiet was to enable him to keep his soul in such close communion with his Father that he might become aware at all times of what his Father's will for him was, and might be perfectly obedient. If we consider how great a longing there must have been in his heart, especially in the later years at Nazareth, to get to work among men and help them out of their bondage into the true life, and how the divine Father must have longed that his Son should begin his redeeming work, we can only conclude that it did not begin sooner because his human spirit needed this long discipline in order that it might become a perfect instrument of the divine will.

Then when at last the time appointed by the Father arrived, our Lord left his home and was baptized. At his Baptism he received the spiritual endowment which was necessary for his work and no doubt with it the full consciousness that he was the Messiah—anointed to be Saviour not only of his own nation but also of the whole world. (He who knew the Old Testament scriptures as he did must have understood, as the Jews in general did not, that the promised Messiah was for the whole world and not only for the Jewish nation.)

We should have supposed that now, after the long years of quiet and prayer at Nazareth, and having been filled with the power of the Spirit for his work, he was certainly ready to begin it. But God knew he was not yet ready, and therefore he inspired him to go at once into the wilderness quite apart from all men for forty days. S. Mark uses a very strong expression;

he says, 'the Spirit driveth him forth [*ekballei*] into the wilderness.' The words imply that his human spirit was very eager to begin work at once, and that it had to be most forcibly restrained by the Spirit, and his obedience put to a severe test, before he could be induced to delay still longer. Our Lord's own account of the temptation he endured in the wilderness leaves us in no doubt as to the purpose of his long retreat. He was tempted in all possible ways to go his own way—to do what his human spirit prompted him to do; but he remained in such close communion with his Father that he was able to resist all such temptation and to follow his Father's guidance only. We can conclude, therefore, that he was sent into this retreat that he might learn that all the mighty spiritual gifts with which he was endowed were to be used only at the prompting of his Father, and that he was never to trust merely to his own human desires or judgement in using them.

Then after all this long preparation, his ministry among men began. But even then he did not dare to take a single step or do any work till he had found out by praying what his Father's will concerning it was. At specially critical times in his work we read that he spent the night in prayer. S. Mark gives us an instance of this soon after his ministry in Galilee began. He had healed very many people, and had taught in the synagogue so wonderfully that the people were astonished at his teaching; it seemed to them certain that there was divine authority behind his words of a different kind altogether from that which their own scribes possessed. There was a wave of enthusiasm about him. It seemed as if a great opportunity had come. He must have longed with all his heart to embrace it.

Therefore, just because his own desire was so strong, as we may suppose, 'in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed.' The result was that when Peter and the others find him, and say unto him, 'all are seeking thee,' that is, come back and embrace this splendid opportunity, he said, 'let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth.'<sup>1</sup> We may dare to say that no man, apart from the guidance of the Spirit of God, would have come to such a decision: it was natural to suppose that it *must* be best to enter in where there was such a good opening, instead of going on somewhere else.<sup>2</sup>

S. John gives us a similar and even more remarkable instance. When our Lord had fed the multitudes, and they were so enthusiastic about him that they wanted to make him their king, he sent them all away and his disciples, and 'withdrew again into the mountain himself alone,' that he might find out what his Father's will was and gain strength to obey it, rather than be guided by his own overwhelming desire to make the most of such a great opportunity. The result was that the next day, when he taught in the synagogue at Capernaum, where all these people were gathered, he said such strange and difficult words that not only did no new disciples gather to him, but many of his former ones 'went back and walked no more with him.'<sup>3</sup> What mere man would ever have acted thus in similar circumstances? It is plain that he had so struggled in

<sup>1</sup> S. Mark 1: 21-39.

<sup>2</sup> See S. Luke 5: 12-16 for a similar instance.

<sup>3</sup> S. John 6: 22-66.

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prayer the night before that he was able to give up his own way and follow God's, the way that is higher than all mere human ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth.

So, again, before he chose his Apostles he spent the whole night in prayer to God, evidently that he might be able to set aside his own strong desire to choose the men he wanted, and to choose those only whom the Father had chosen.<sup>1</sup>

Also, in addition to these special instances, there are indications throughout the records of his ministry, especially in S. John's Gospel, that he did not trust himself to take any new step without consulting his Father and waiting till his will was made known. 'Mine hour is not yet come,' he was wont to say, meaning that his Father had not yet made known to him what he was to do in the matter, and that he must wait till he had. He wanted to impress this fact on his disciples and people in general: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth.' 'I can of myself do nothing; as I hear I judge.'<sup>2</sup>

Again, when the time of his passion drew on, and his Father's will concerning it was becoming more and more plain to him, we are told that he withdrew from his work and from the multitude and 'took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke 6: 12-16.

<sup>2</sup> S. John 5: 19, 20, 30. See also S. John 8: 28; 10: 18; 12: 49f.; 14: 10, 31; 15: 10; 17: 4.

to pray.' S. Luke's account of what happened makes it clear that the purpose of this retirement was to gain strength, both for himself and his disciples, for bearing the agony and death which was at hand; for the answer to his prayer was the wonderful transfiguration and the appearance of Moses and Elijah, 'who spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem,' speaking of it no doubt as that to which the law and prophets had all pointed, and through which was to be accomplished the salvation of the world.<sup>1</sup>

As the time drew still nearer, Jesus felt that the agony was more than he could bear,<sup>2</sup> and therefore he was wont to go to the Mount of Olives to wrestle in prayer that he might gain strength to do what he realized his Father was asking him to do.

On the last night of all, in Gethsemane, he said to his disciples, 'my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death,' and he 'began to be greatly amazed and sore troubled.' Then he went away even from the chosen three, that he might be quite alone with his Father. And then we are told he endured the greatest agony and the most appalling struggle that had ever come upon him. He had lived in the closest union with his Father all his life; he had never been even in the least degree disobedient; his soul had never been weakened by even the least sin; and yet now, just at the end, he felt he could not bear the agony that was upon him, and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass away from him. 'And he said, Abba Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt.' This perfect submission

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke 9: 28ff.

<sup>2</sup> See S. John 12: 27, 28.

of his human will enabled the Father to lay upon him the whole burden of fallen humanity. The cup was not taken away, but 'there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.' But even then he had to wrestle in prayer with the whole force of which his soul was capable—'and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground'—before he was able to fulfil the Father's will. At last he was able. When Judas with the band of soldiers came upon him, he, 'knowing all the things that were coming upon him, went forth, and saith unto them, Whom seek ye? . . . I am he.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus the example of Christ's own life on earth teaches us more clearly than any words could about the necessity and meaning of a life of prayer. It shows what he meant by abiding in his Father so that he might do the Father's will only and never his own. Prayer was the great work of his life. It meant for him a constant daily struggle till the end, even though, as we must again remind ourselves, his human will had never once been disobedient or weakened by sin, as our wills have been. It was through this constant struggle to live in close communion with his Father, and the complete obedience to his Father's will in which it issued, that his human nature was made perfect, and he became the Saviour of the whole world.

When, therefore, he tells us so to live that he may abide in us and we may abide in him even as he abides in his Father, there can be no doubt as to what he means. He must at least mean that prayer is to be

<sup>1</sup> See S. Matt. 26: 36-46; S. Mark 14: 32-42; S. Luke 12: 39-46; S. John 18: 1-6.



the great work of our lives, which is to absorb all our best thought and energy. Can there be any doubt about this? Prayer was this to him, though he was sinless; otherwise he could not have accomplished the work his Father sent him to do. Can it be of less importance to us, whose wills have been weakened throughout our lives by disobedience, wilfulness, and sin? Can we expect to accomplish the work God has given us to do—the great work of spreading his kingdom among men—if we only pray occasionally, or only spend that amount of time and energy in prayer which we can spare from our other occupations? Shall we presume to think we are equal to the work God asks us to do each day, if we are only in conscious communion with him for a few minutes occasionally?

It is necessary that we should put the matter thus plainly before ourselves, and question our own consciences as to whether we can be said to abide in Christ, that is, whether we are fulfilling what Christ said was the one indispensable condition for bringing forth his fruit in the world. This will steady our minds and reinforce our wills in face of the daily temptation to do something less difficult (all other work is less difficult), when we ought to be praying. It will help us to aim at a life of communion with Christ at times when such communion is not delightful to us. Such times come even to Christ's most loving disciples, strange though this seems.<sup>1</sup>

We may gain further help in this direction if we reflect that the men and women in the Apostolic age whose lives bore such wonderful fruit for our Lord that all later ages have marvelled at it, were people who

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter III.



did abide in Christ as he desired. The result of their labours was so great, compared with that of most of the missionary work of our own day, that people are entirely at a loss to account for the contrast. Herein, however, is the main secret of it; they so lived that Christ abode in them and they in him. They did nothing apart from him. The life they manifested was not their own but his. Even the most impetuous and naturally self-willed of them all, S. Paul, could at last say, 'I live, yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.' As a body they did not possess more intellectual power than many bodies of men and women who work for Christ to-day; but they did, as most of us do not, live lives of such habitual communion with him, that he was able to guide them in general and in detail,<sup>1</sup> and to fill them with his power.<sup>2</sup> They became Christlike saviours of mankind. And wherever such people appear—whenever men are able to see Christ's life manifested as it was in them—the same kind of wonders happen.

Such is the appeal that Christ's words and example make to our *minds*. But when he asks us so to live that he may abide in us and we in him, he is making a most loving appeal also to our hearts. For he is inviting us to make him our constant friend, companion, adviser and helper. It is as though he were saying to us, 'I am King of the kingdom I ask you to spread; to me all authority has been given and all wisdom and power for the building up of my Church. I invite you to share in it all. I want to tell you my aims and plans and hopes; to show you how and where you can help me to

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Acts 8: 26-39; 10: 9-20; 13: 1-4; 16: 6-10, 25; 18: 9-11; 23: 11.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 2: 41-47; 4: 32, 33; 5: 12-14; 6: 8-10, etc.

fulfil them. I am your captain in the great fight; your leader in the glorious adventure that is at last to win all mankind for my Father. I will train you if you will let me; I can and will enable you to become all you are capable of becoming, and to do your part with me worthily of God. Abide in me, then. Take no step without me. Give me your mind and your heart. Come to me in every difficulty. Share your whole life with me—its joys, sorrows, temptations, victories, hopes, fears; your likes and dislikes, your loves, your all—as I share mine with you. And together we will love and struggle and make plans, and be sore beset, yet always overcoming, and step by step we will win the kingdom, and you shall be sharers in my joy, as you have been in my struggle.’ Even as he said to his first disciples, ‘Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me.’<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER II

### THE OBJECT OF PRAYER

PROBABLY we have all found it difficult to understand what the object of prayer is. And when we turn to the Gospels for help, the reports of Christ’s teaching on the subject often appear to be as conflicting as our own experience. There are some passages, for instance, which seem to imply that the main object of prayer is to ask for and obtain what *we* want, e.g. S. Matthew 7: 7-11; 18: 19, 20; 21: 22; S. Luke 18: 1-7. Also

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke 22: 29.

we have known or heard of innumerable instances of people who have prayed on the strength of these passages for what they wanted, and have received such direct and wonderful answers that it seems they were justified in taking the passages as if they stood alone. Yet they do not stand alone, and the object of prayer cannot be gathered from them when they are taken as though they did. Also we ourselves have encountered even more evidence on the other side—the evidence of prayers that were apparently not answered though they were prayed in faith—which contradicts the notion that the object of prayer is to ask for and obtain merely what we want. If we examine the former evidence, we shall probably almost always find that it is afforded either by children or by those who are beginners in prayer. And we can well understand that our Lord often desires to encourage them to ask for what they greatly want, that he may give it them and thereby enable them to understand, what they could not understand otherwise, that he is indeed their Father, who loves them and cares greatly for their welfare and happiness.

It is necessary to examine the rest of our Lord's teaching on the subject; to take his teaching as a whole, or to dwell on that which includes the rest, as a whole includes its parts. This last is to be found chiefly in the writings of S. John, who in this, as in so much else, saw and understood as a connected whole what the other evangelists had reported in fragments. According to him, Christ's teaching is that the prayer which is acceptable to God is that which is offered in his (Christ's) name, that is, prayer which is the outcome of a character like Christ's; prayer such as he himself is ever praying. Or, to take a passage which may be

said to be a summary of Christ's teaching on this subject, true prayer is that of one who abides in Christ and in whom Christ's words abide.<sup>1</sup>

This teaching taken, as all his teaching must be, along with the example of his life, leaves us in no doubt as to what the true object of prayer is. Christ lived, as we have been thinking, simply to do his Father's will, not his own; that was the one object of his lifelong struggle, the one reason why he kept his soul in unbroken communion with his Father. Anyone, therefore, who prays in his name, or abiding in him, prays always not that his own will may be done, but that God's may. He only prays unconditionally for what he himself desires when it is certain that his will and God's are at one in the matter.

This is in complete accord with the model our Lord gave to his disciples on which their whole system of prayer was to be formed. The Lord's Prayer makes it plain that the object of all our prayers is to be that God's name may be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. And then, in order that this may be, it directs us to pray for our daily bread, that we may all have physical and spiritual strength for doing God's will; that our trespasses may be forgiven, lest unhealed wounds in our souls prevent us from doing his will and spreading his kingdom; that we may be enabled to escape the snares of the evil one and not wander from God's way, so that abiding in it we may be able to help him as much as possible to attain his desire for the salvation of all mankind.

That is as far as possible from teaching us to pray

<sup>1</sup> S. John 15: 7-16.

for what we want for ourselves. God's glory and the increase of his kingdom is to be the one prevailing object of desire in our hearts; we are to pray for our own needs only with a view to this; and I am to pray for myself only as one among the rest. It is very important to bear this last truth in mind, in view of the fact that we have most of us been accustomed to pray, each for himself or herself, as though that were to be our main object in praying—as though the order for prayer was for my needs first, other peoples' needs afterwards, and God's needs last of all if any time remains. Our Lord's method is the exact opposite of this. As he taught that the great and first commandment is to love God with all one's heart and mind and strength, and the second is like unto it, namely, to love one's neighbour as oneself: so in teaching us to pray he says the great and first object of all prayer is the supply of God's needs, and the second 'like unto it,' because God's great desire, as we know it, is for the salvation of mankind, is the supply of his people's needs, and that each is to pray for his own needs only because he is one of the vast multitude whom God longs for and whose help he requires for his work.

Prayer after this manner, therefore, if it comes from the heart, is the destruction of selfishness. The more we pray thus, the more Christ's love takes the place in our hearts of the old selfishness, the more we approach to the condition of him who said, 'my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work.'

Let us now go on to consider what the will of God is, as Christ has revealed it, that we may realize better the greatness of the vocation Christ is giving us when he asks us to make that will the object of all our prayer.

There are many people to whom 'the will of God' conveys a dreary, dark idea. They identify it chiefly with disaster, or a demand upon them to do very disagreeable things. When some disaster happens, caused probably by men's sins or carelessness, it is frequently attributed to the will of God. How common it is to hear people say, 'Yes, it's certainly very bad, but we must put up with it, it's the will of God.' Again, very many of us were taught in our childhood that doing God's will chiefly meant spending Sunday in a very dreary way, and on the other days giving up delightful things and doing what was disagreeable. We were perhaps taught, moreover, that God was rather like a terrible all-seeing policeman, who was always on the look-out to catch and punish us whenever we did wrong: that we were generally displeasing him and not doing his will, and that some judgement was certain to fall on us sooner or later. Hence the whole idea of doing God's will was distasteful to us, to say the least of it: we did not want his will to be done, and if we tried to do it, it was only because we were afraid of the consequences of not doing it. Also, perhaps, we, in common with a vast multitude of people, were taught to form our ideas of God's character chiefly from the Old Testament, which seemed to us to show that God was a Being who reigned above in dreadful majesty and who was greatly to be feared, rather than a perfectly loving and tender Father with whom we could always feel safe. The stories of the Old Testament indeed fascinated us, but the whole book gave us the impression that God was constantly engaged in punishing people for not doing his will, and inventing new methods of punishment. And the general effect of it on us was much the same as it was on the Jewish



nation in general, who became so afraid of the great and awful Jehovah that they did not dare even to pronounce his name lest some judgement should fall on them. It is no wonder, then, that the thought of doing God's will produced in us, and all who had received similar ideas of God, terror rather than eager desire; that it chilled rather than thrilled us.

We used to think about Jesus Christ as very loving and kind and as on our side—who could read the Gospels and not think so? We felt that if God were like him, we should not be afraid and should try hard to please him; but he perhaps represented to us not God, but rather a loving being who had come to deliver us from the wrath of God, which remained as the dreadful background of our religion.

But what is the truth about God as Christ has revealed it? That there is no God different from Jesus; that Jesus himself is God—the one only God manifested at last so that men can know him; that we cannot know what God is like except by knowing Jesus. Hence the ideas of God which are to be found in the Old Testament are only such notions of his character as he was able to get into the minds of his prophets, before his life had been manifested in human nature—before men had actually *seen God living*. It is true that some of the prophets and psalmists were able to rise almost to Christian heights in their thoughts of God, but they were the exceptions. They produced a literature about God which is incomparably more true and beautiful than that of any other religion before Christ came; they were manifestly inspired of God: but his inspirations were necessarily mingled with their own notions, so that in many respects they

gave a distorted view of his character. Christ is the one only true and perfect revelation of him, and therefore the light given by him is the only light by which we can determine what is and what is not divinely inspired in the Old Testament, or in any other accounts of what God is. God manifested is Jesus Christ; his will is that which Jesus did in human nature. God's relation to us is always that which Jesus manifested in his relations with men.

Supposing that all our ideas of God had been based on this teaching of Christ, how should we have thought of him when we were young? In the case of those of us whose ideas were thus based, how did we think of him? As one who loved us and was far more fond of us than even the most loving mother could be; that he was always ready to help us; that we could always feel safe with him, knowing that he would believe the best, not the worst of us; that he did not desire to punish us, and would never do so if he could find any other means whatever of inducing us to be good: that he did, however, desire for us above all else that we should be good, while he was working continually for our welfare and happiness. We should have realized that he wished to share in our life and all its details; that our joys and sorrows were in truth his own because he loved us with **all his heart**. We should have seen, moreover, that all the love which anyone else gave us had come from him: that our parents and other relations and our best friends did what they did for us because he inspired them to do so; that the delightful uncle, for instance, or friend who used sometimes to come and take us to a circus or pantomime and tip us handsomely when he said good-bye, had got the whole idea of doing it from Jesus

Christ, who enjoyed our enjoyment far more than the most loving uncle could. Also, we should have known that in all those troubles which were so unendurable to us at the time, but which grown-ups often laughed at as nothings, we could always go to him and be quite sure that he would understand, and help us through them. In fact, we should have rejoiced to be with him. He would have been the one great, wonderful, all-loving Friend from whom came the love of all the other people who loved and were kind to us. We should have talked to him constantly. He would have been the centre of our love, the evoker of all our best enthusiasm.

And then we should have been able to hear and ready to respond to what he wanted to tell us as we got older. We should have understood long ago what, it is to be hoped, we do understand now concerning his relation to us and his will.

His relation to us: what is it? That of one who desires to share in all that happens to us: who fights with us against all the temptations that come; who feels with us what we feel of joy or sorrow, of temptation and darkness, of victory or disappointment, of love or the difficulty of loving; one, moreover, who is always calling us to higher things, and believes we can accomplish them: who does not merely wish us to be happy, as we thought when we were children, but desires with all his heart that we may be holy and full of love; who calls upon us, therefore, for more and more self-sacrifice; who can never rest till all selfishness has died in us and we are perfect instruments of the divine love for the redemption of mankind; who, that we may become that, can bear to let us suffer and agonize as we fight against the sin of the world and try to bear

others' burdens; who asks us to follow him along the way of the Cross, the way of self-emptying, since that is the one way which leads to fullness of life for ourselves and all others with whom we have to do.

And his will—the will of the Father which he manifests, and calls upon us to accomplish through prayer and all other possible ways—what is that? It is the will he manifested on earth, that every one without exception should be healed, taught, comforted, strengthened, blessed, raised to an ever higher condition till he has risen at last, like Christ himself, high above the reach of sin and temptation, into a life of perfect and everlasting union with God. It is the will of him who loves every person in existence with a love which has no limit at all. It is the will of the divine Father, whose nature it is to give away eternally all his life; whose one desire for each sinner is that he may be filled with that life; who is therefore at work constantly in and through all that happens, all that is brought about even by the wills of sinful, selfish men, like the Great War, to bring good out of it—to make even the worst happenings into means by which more good may come. It is the will of one who, because he is love, can never will anything but good; who hates sin and all its consequences with the whole force of his being; who is therefore fighting against sickness, disease, ignorance, and all the other woes that afflict men and women; who hails all good priests, doctors, nurses, scientists, and others who are fighting diseases, spiritual or physical, as his fellow-workers, whether they are conscious of their union with him or not; who, amid the sufferings and sinfulness of the present, looks on to the time when he will be able to wipe away every tear from

all eyes; 'and death shall be no more: neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more,' when 'the first things are passed away,' and all things are made new.<sup>1</sup>

This is the will of the one only God—the eternal Father manifested in Christ—the perfect Giver to all of whatever life they are, or can become, capable of receiving.

But, alas! it is the will which is being constantly opposed by the wills of sinful men. God cannot get his will done in earth as it is in heaven, except in so far as men's wills obey him. He, therefore, implores us all to pray and strive in all possible ways that his will may be done.

Does this puzzle us? Are we inclined to say as some do, if God is almighty and all loving, why does he not perform his will whether we co-operate with him or not; why did he not, for instance, stop the War? No doubt many people overcome by suffering have said this in bitter grief and anger. But those who say it have not understood what Christ's revelation of God's nature is, namely, that he is perfect love, and that he cannot therefore wish for men anything less than that they too should become perfectly loving. He cannot, like a good-natured indulgent father, wish them merely to have a transient happiness or 'good time'. He must always go on working for them till they are loving, and so on the way to obtain the only perfect eternal happiness and peace—the fullness of the life of love. But God cannot make men love if they will not do so; he can only induce them to do so, and till they do, bear the results of their selfishness. He cannot, for instance,

<sup>1</sup> Rev. 21: 3-5.

take away the symptoms, such as the War, of the disease of selfishness while the disease still remains. He cannot act as a foolish or wicked doctor might who tried to take away the outward marks of smallpox and let the patient go out among his fellows while the disease remained. He can only work to cure the disease itself, and he can do and does that even through such an appalling madness as the War—witness the millions of men and women who were induced to sacrifice themselves even unto death during its course, for the sake of others.

This is the will with which he asks us to co-operate: that of him who will bear all the insults and sins of men without crushing or annihilating them, because he is working and hoping always for the time when their wills shall have changed, and they do his will instead of their own.

It is plain, therefore, that when Christ calls us to pray that God's will may be done, and to make that the main object of our lives, he is giving us the most glorious possible vocation. What can compare with enabling God to fulfil his will for man? What else is of any importance at all except the doing of God's will? Work that is not an attempt to do it must be wasted work. The one all important thing for us is to find out what God's holy, loving will is, in general and in detail, and then to pray and strive with all our might that we may do it ourselves and enable others to do it, at whatever cost.

Let us never think, therefore, that the main object of prayer can be that *our* will may be done—that we may get what *we* want. In all our thoughts about prayer and in all our prayers let us bear in mind that



the one only object of those who are guided by the spirit of Christ must be to do the will of God and to help others to do it; and that when Christ gave us the Lord's Prayer, he was showing us the way by which we can fulfil the highest vocation which can be given to man—to become an instrument through whom God can accomplish his holy will.

### CHAPTER III

#### **WHY IS PRAYER SO DIFFICULT?**

ALL who have tried for any length of time to lead a life of prayer find that it is a far more difficult thing to persevere in than any other work they have ever undertaken. There is no other mental exercise so difficult as that of keeping our minds fixed on God in prayer; there is no other work which is so greatly beset by temptation, no other which makes so much demand on our whole being. Our own experience has, I am sure, been that we have to look back on far more failures and broken resolutions in regard to prayer than in regard to anything else we have tried to do. We are aware that this is so chiefly because God is invisible in himself and because we have never seen Jesus Christ, who is God manifested in human nature. We suppose that it must have been comparatively easy for the first disciples to live in communion with Christ, even after he had passed out of sight, because they had been so familiar with the sight of him. His face and smile and bodily gestures must have been engraven indelibly on their minds. It is so with us when one we have greatly loved passes out of our sight at death; we can go

on holding intercourse with him, if we try to, without the great effort that is necessary for holding communion with God. A continuous effort of will is necessary that we may keep our thought fixed on, and hold conscious intercourse with, one whom we have never seen; and a still greater effort is required to listen in silence to what he says to us. As we know, any noises outside, or the movements of people in the church, or any unwonted sight may distract our minds from God; and even when we are in the quietest place, or in a beautiful church which suggests the ideas of prayer and peace and devotion, hosts of thoughts may at any time come into our minds from somewhere and spoil our communion with God. Many people find that evil thoughts are suggested to them more frequently and with greater force during their prayer times than at any other times. At prayer times also our own plans for work or pleasure are apt to come before our minds, as if imploring us to attend to them and think them out then especially. In fact, we usually find it easier to think of anything else than God and his will.

We pray—we have come to pray—we delight in prayer after the inward man, but we find a law in our members warring against the law of our highest self, and striving always to bring us into captivity under its dominion. We have never heard of anyone who has attained to a life of habitual communion with Christ who has won it otherwise than by a continuous struggle, which has taxed his powers of body, mind and spirit as nothing else has. Hence it is not surprising that so few people even aim at a life of prayer. Our fallen, selfish human nature, always inclined to do what is easy rather than the hard things, shrinks greatly from this difficult

exercise of prayer, and gladly accepts any plausible excuse for doing something which requires less strenuous effort. And there is a vast deal of public opinion all round us which furnishes the excuses our consciences require. 'The world' suggests to us in many plausible ways that prayer is a waste of time, or a form of selfishness, which people in these strenuous days should beware of and resist, when there are so many things to be done and people to be attended to. The very fact that so many people who seem to live good lives do not pray at all, or that so many more are content with a few formal prayers morning and evening, which are quite easy to say, influences us strongly when we are waiting for an excuse for thinking that God cannot really want us to imitate Christ in his life of prayer.

It is a matter of universal experience that prayer is beset by more temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil than anything else in our lives.

Now it is plain that our Lord could, if he wished, make prayer a great deal easier than it is for us, and it seems natural to ask why does he not do it? He knows how hard it is, and why it is so hard. He desires for us more than anything else that we should pray so much that we may abide in him. Why, then, does he not give us visions of himself from time to time, or frequently send waves of sensible joy into our hearts and minds, or in some other ways known to him counteract the force of our temptations, so that in spite of them we could easily keep in communion with him? He does this at times, especially with beginners; we have all known times when communion with him was so full of intense joy that we desired nothing so much as to abide with our Lord. Why, then, people say, does this

not happen much more frequently, that we may learn to find our chief joy habitually in being in conscious communion with him? We feel sure that if we could see him and hear him talking to us we should want nothing so much as to be with him always. Why, then, does he require us to live so much by faith? Why does he give so little sight or anything that is equivalent to it?

Such questions often sound very plausible. But if we think about the matter carefully, we can at least see partial answers to them. Our Lord wants us to love him, and in loving him to love our heavenly Father, with all our heart and soul and mind and strength; and in sinners, such as we are, love cannot become perfect till it has been greatly tried—till it has endured in spite of hard and constant temptation. Love such as he desires to evoke from us includes, for instance, complete *trust* in him: but this can only be produced in us through a long series of acts of trust in him which we make in spite of appearances and temptations which tend to cause distrust: therefore he puts us in the best condition for making such acts. For instance, it is not easy to see why our life of prayer is so difficult when he could make it easy. He asks us to trust him, that in this, as in all else, he is taking the most loving course possible, though he often does not seem to be doing so. Again, it is not easy for us to see how all the misery in the world is compatible with the truth that God is love; to see why God made man liable to sin and suffering when he might have made him otherwise; or why, having made him thus, he does not interfere much more often to save him from the consequences of his sin. God asks us to trust him in all this that he is really love, so that all his actions are those of love, and through

that trust to find out what we can of his reasons for acting as he does. God has been, and is, much more misunderstood all over the world than any innocent man or woman ever has been who was supposed to be guilty. Even the glorious revelation of himself which he has made in Christ is often scoffed at as foolishness. As when he was visibly on earth, so now, people who once were his disciples leave him because of intellectual difficulties such as the above; and still, without removing them, he goes on saying to those who are faithful, 'Will' ye also go away?—testing their faith and love.

Can we not understand this? Supposing that our love for him stands these tests; if in spite of all appearances and temptations we give him a love which trusts him entirely: then our love has become of an altogether higher quality than love can be which has not stood such tests. Our Lord's own human love was tried to the uttermost; the test which was the culmination of all previous tests came at the very end of his life, when it seemed to him, as he hung dying on the Cross and was in the utmost need, that God had forsaken him. And it was just because his human love stood that test and remained faithful in spite of all that could possibly happen to shake his trust, that he became the Saviour of mankind. His love, thus become perfect, transformed human nature wholly, and brought it into complete union with God. He as man loved God to the uttermost, as God loved him. The divine and human natures, therefore, were at last one, and the salvation of the whole human race was possible. There was a new creation, a recreated human nature, which could gradually be transmitted to all the members of the human family. Hence, when Christ asks us to give ourselves to him

in complete trust, in spite of all temptations to do otherwise, he is leading us into the one only condition in which we can make his perfect love our own. When at last he can evoke that love from us, then we become truly saviours of the world—members of the one Saviour, who are actually living by his life. And we can understand that he feels it worth while to wait on, without explaining his actions or justifying himself, while we fight through our difficulties as he fought through his, until we are able to give him a love so strong and true that we are able to *trust* him to the uttermost.

Let us look at the same matter in another light. We know that there is no other work which makes so much demand on our will as that of prayer; and that a life of prayer—of abiding in him—such as our Lord demands of his true disciples, is beyond all comparison more difficult to persevere in than any other kind of life whatever. Suppose, then, that we, in obedience to Christ's will and relying on his strength, set ourselves to live this life and persevere in it, it is evident that we are seeking God day by day with the whole force of our wills: in other words, are giving him the most devoted and forceful love of which we are capable. The result must be that we become day by day more closely united to him, much more alive with his life. Thus he can manifest himself through us—do his wonderful works through us—to a far greater extent than if we only gave him a devotion which cost little effort. Can we not understand, then, that it is as difficult as it is so to live that Christ may abide in us and we in him, because Christ is always trying to evoke from us love that is given with the whole force of our wills, that is to say, that he is at once calling and enabling us to



love him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and our neighbour for his sake?

We must not, therefore, repine and get out of heart when prayer is very difficult, when it seems as though we could not keep our minds fixed on God, when we cannot even feel sure he is there, when no answer to our prayer can be discerned. We must not expect that people like us, whose wills have constantly been weakened by selfishness and sin, can attain to close union with our Lord, so that we become his instruments for manifesting his life in the world, till we have passed victoriously through the greatest difficulties and temptations we are capable of enduring. Some day in the next world, if not in this, we shall pour out our hearts in thanksgiving to him because he did not let us have an easy life; because he went on trusting us to persevere in his own way, the narrow way, the way of the Cross, the way of habitual prayer, in spite of all its difficulties; because he called upon us to attain to a life of communion with himself through the greatest efforts we were capable of making.

#### CHAPTER IV

### **PRAYING TO OUR FATHER IN SECRET**

WE have considered our Lord's teaching as to the necessity of a life of habitual prayer and as to the true object of all prayer, and why he gives us such a high and difficult vocation. Let us now go on to examine his teaching as to how we are to pray, and try to frame a plan for praying after the manner he has laid down for us.

He says: 'When ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee.'<sup>1</sup>

All true prayer involves a shutting of our door and lifting up of our hearts to our Father in secret. That does not mean, of course, that we must be physically alone in order to pray rightly. We can pray, as our Lord himself did, both when we are alone and when we are in a crowd. But it means that we must be spiritually alone with God—each of us—if our prayer is to be what God wants it to be. The shutting of our door means the shutting out by the force of our wills the things which are not of God, the things which distract us from God in our times of prayer: so that, however many people there may be around us, each one of us is alone with God his Father 'in secret'. We can only get into conscious union with him by this effort of shutting off all else and giving ourselves to him, our Father. He is always there, and his love is streaming upon us, but the attractions of all sorts of other things are with us also to prevent our realization of his presence.

Prayer is the chief means by which we rise out of our selfishness to God, and when we think of these words of our Lord we see how it is so: for it requires a supreme effort of our wills to shut our doors to all else but God, so that our whole hearts and minds are

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. 6: 5, 6.

given to him. Christ does not mean, of course, that we are to shut other people out of our minds and hearts in order to pray to God. We are not to empty ourselves of all other kinds of love in order to love God. It is, on the contrary, a part of our highest duty to go to God our Father with our minds and hearts filled with the needs of others. We are to take them inside with us; it is what our Lord specially wants. Remember that God does not invite us to pray to him merely in order that we may enjoy ourselves. The mistake of some mystics has been that they sought God chiefly for the delight they had in being with him: as though S. Peter and the others had been allowed to stay on the mount and gaze on the glory of Christ, regardless of the needs of people down on the earth. This is not what our Lord means, but he means that when we take in the people, whose needs we desire to have fulfilled, we are to take them to God; our love for them is to incline our hearts Godwards, towards our Father in heaven, that he may fill not only us, but the people who are dear to us, with his best gifts, so that we and they may do his will, may be the kind of instruments he wants for his work in the world.

When we thus go to God taking our friends with us, our hearts and minds are not distracted from him by any love we have for other people. Rather we are lifted towards him by those loves, because if we really love people in the sense that we want to have their lives filled full, then this love makes us eager to go to our Father that he may fill them. Whenever we have true love for anybody, that love opens a door to God. We are only to shut out the things that distract us from God; and then, when the door of our mind is shut to

them, we enter with all our friends and those for whom we are working into the secret place where God our Father is, and where He is always waiting for us.

But sometimes it is almost impossible for us to shut our door thus and lift up our hearts in prayer to our Father. For we may have been greatly disturbed by something which has just happened, or we may feel very much out of charity with some one, so that there is a real barrier between us and our Father. When this is so, it is best to sit down quietly and *think* before trying to pray. We can think that God our Father, known to us in our loving Saviour Jesus Christ, is here with us, whether we are conscious of his presence or not; that he loves us and knows what has happened—knows perhaps that we cannot help being greatly disturbed and upset; that he is not angry with us because we are feeling distracted, or hard, or cold, but desires very greatly to enable us to get into communion with him and to drive away all that prevents it. We can go on to think that if Jesus Christ, who is actually here, were suddenly to show himself, we should at once know what he wished us to do; his presence and sympathy and love—the very sight of his loving face—would calm our minds, enable us at once to forgive the person we were angry with (if we were angry), and we should desire nothing so much as to talk to our dear Lord and hear him talk to us.

Sometimes after thinking like that for two or three minutes we may feel reassured, calm and loving, and able to pray. At other times it may take longer. That cannot be helped. God would say to us, we are sure, "There is no hurry, think on a little more till the

disturbance has gone, and then come and let us commune together.'

It follows from this that we *learn* to pray chiefly in our times of private prayer rather than in the public services of the Church. This is the teaching of all our experience, if we reflect upon it. The services of the Church must go on whether we follow them or not. The Church cannot wait till we have collected our scattered thoughts and brought our minds and hearts to God: and it is obviously much more difficult to follow a service which goes on whether we follow it or not, than it is to say our own private prayers. And therefore the Church takes it for granted that the members of the congregation have learnt to pray in their private prayers, have learnt how to shut out distracting thoughts and give their minds to God. If we have not learnt to do it in private, we shall not be able to do it in Offices or even at the Eucharist—except perhaps in the time of silence after the consecration, which is the most wonderful opportunity we have in our lives. But even that is so short that, unless we have acquired the habit of shutting our door to distracting things, probably even then we shall not be able to make very much use of it. We shall find that it is gone, and we have only been on earth when we might have been in heaven!

Hence it is of the utmost necessity that we should seize or make as many opportunities as possible for quiet communion with God every day. We ought to aim at getting our principal time for quiet in the morning and as early as possible, before the other work of the day begins. It is a matter of universal experience that if we have not tried to be alone with God so that our minds and

hearts are filled with him and his will before our other work begins, we are not at all likely to do that other work in his way rather than our own; and that it is extremely difficult to shut out the distracting things later in the day when we wish to pray to our Father 'in secret'. Hence nothing but some very urgent necessity should be allowed to interfere with our quiet time in the early morning, if we are free to dispose of our morning time as we will. If we are not free to do this, and cannot get quiet in the morning, then we can expect our Lord to counteract this disadvantage by special gifts of grace. But we have no right or reason to expect this, if we can get quiet times in the morning for being alone with God, and spend them in some other work as though it were more important.

Then when this time in the morning has been secured, we ought to proceed to secure opportunities during the day for leaving other work, even if it is only for a quarter of an hour at a time, to wait on God again without distraction, that he may repeat or remind us of the inspirations he gave in the morning. And again at night we must try to make as long a time as possible for praying in secret, that the other work of the day may not mar our life of communion with Christ, but, on the contrary, may be lifted up to God as part of the sacrifice of himself which he ever presents to the Father.

Such a programme as I have sketched will perhaps seem to many an impossibility, their circumstances and work being what they are. But it is safe to say that the great majority of people who now think it impossible to set apart sufficient time in the day for communion with God, would find it by no means impossible if they



realized its importance, not merely for themselves but for their work—for enabling them to do that work according to God's will instead of their own, that is to say, in the only way in which it can produce divine results.

It is a very common experience, especially in India, to meet people who desire to devote their lives to Christ's work, who are restless, over-wrought, frequently changing their plans or going about from one work to another, as if they could not do without change; who complain that they have no time for quiet and prayer, are easily irritated, manifest almost nothing of the calmness and peace and deep concentration of Christ as he is depicted by the evangelists, but are usually in a hurry, and anxious, expecting quick results. And when it is suggested to them that the arrangements of their life and work ought to be altered, so that they may follow Christ's example of a life of prayer, they at first take for granted that such rearrangement is quite impossible; but afterwards when they have been persuaded to try it, they find it not only possible but the only kind of arrangement by which their work can be rightly done.

Taking for granted now that we are securing as much time as possible for daily communion with God 'in secret', that is, not merely as much time as we may think possible, but as much as Christ sees to be possible, I want to go on to suggest a way in which we can use our quiet time in praying after the manner of the Lord's Prayer. There are, no doubt, many other possible ways in which we can do this. But this suggestion, even if it is not adopted, will I hope serve to show what praying according to our Lord's method implies. I write as one who is conscious that he has himself tried to pray for years after a manner of his own, or according to methods sug-

gested by books on prayer which differ in many respects fundamentally from that given by our Lord, and who has learnt by manifold experience, his own and that of many others, to see his mistake, and to realize that Christ's method is one by which, if we follow it persistently, we can be raised far more completely than we are apt to suppose above the distracting thoughts which spoil our prayer, and can become closely united to our Lord in mind and heart.

Our Lord, it is evident, in giving his disciples the Lord's Prayer, gave them not merely a form of words, but a model after the manner of which all our praying should be fashioned; that is, gave not merely words but principles.

Let us, then, proceed to consider how the prayer should be used.

#### CHAPTER V

### PRAYING AFTER THE MANNER OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

'In praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,' or 'from evil'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. 6: 7-13, n.v.

'Our Father which art in heaven.' What is implied in that? When we have 'shut the door' and are with our Father 'in secret', our Lord tells us to begin to address him as the perfect Father. A father means an author of life. Our Father in heaven is the author of all life—the one perfect giver, who gives not only gifts, but himself, to all who desire him. He is the Father of all men, who has given and is giving to them every moment all the life they have, who goes on giving it even though they use his gifts of life and power against him; who offers them, moreover, all the spiritual life they can receive, and will go on doing so till they are filled with his own life, that is, till they are perfected members of his only-begotten Son. He is the Father in a special sense of Christians, because he has already adopted them, as a first-fruit of mankind, into his own family, has made them members of his dear Son, and through the Son ever pours out upon them his own divine life, never ceasing to offer it because they reject it, never ceasing to pour it out more and more abundantly upon all who are receiving it and making it their own.

What, then, does 'our Father' mean to us? It means Father of ourselves and of our own special circle, so to call it, that is, those who are nearest and dearest to us wherever they are, in this world or the next; Father of all the people for whom we work and pray; the ever-loving Father of all sinners, however far gone they are in sin, with whom we are in any kind of relation. It means also Father, whose life is ever flooding the saints in heaven; is being poured out on all those in the next world who are gradually becoming saints, and on those who are struggling to be faithful amid the manifold temptations of this life; is being offered freely to the sinners of Christendom who at present do not want

him, and is ready to be offered to the heathen in this world or the next who have not as yet come to know him.

Now, though our minds may not be able to realize much of this at any particular time when we are saying 'Our Father', yet the words may always enable us to lift up our hearts to the loving Father of all and take a comprehensive sweep, as to speak, of his universe in all parts of which he is pouring out his own life, as well as to think of him as the Father of those for whom at that time we are specially praying. And therefore to lift up our minds and hearts to 'Our Father' at the beginning of our prayer is necessarily to begin with thanksgiving, praise, adoration: 'Our Father, thou art all to us—thy love, thy self-giving has no limit; I praise thee for what thou art to all men, to me and to those for whom especially I desire now to pray.' Thus we begin by rising above our selfishnesses to him, the great Giver of all, whose divine love has been manifested in Jesus Christ so that we can understand it.<sup>1</sup> Such praise and thanksgiving may be expressed in few words or many—the praises of the Psalms are the best possible expressions of it—or it may be a silent lifting up of our hearts in adoration, which continues for a long or short time according to the condition or mood we are in.

But when our hearts are thus filled with thanksgiving and praise to God for what he is and does, then all our prayer which follows becomes in truth a giving of thanks, that is, a showing forth of God's praise, not only with our lips, but by giving ourselves to his service:

<sup>1</sup> Concerning the often misunderstood truth that praying to our Father is praying to Jesus Christ or *vice versa*, see below pp. 44-46.

by labouring that his will may be done, and so making the best return we can make for his goodness.

I suggest that after this we try to do what is difficult at first, but becomes much easier through practice: I mean, to put ourselves in a silent, listening attitude, so that we may give our Father the opportunity he is always longing for of speaking to us and revealing his mind and heart to us more fully through his Spirit who abides within us. This is of such great importance that I want to think of it at some length, for most people are not used to doing it. Perhaps many of us have hesitated to try it because we think of it as that which has been described by mystical writers as an exercise which is at the top of the ladder of prayer, so to speak, which has been called 'higher contemplation,' or 'the prayer of silence,' or 'the prayer of quiet,' or 'the prayer of union.' And since that is generally described by these great people as a condition which is only arrived at after the other steps of the ladder have been successfully surmounted, and we consider ourselves nearer the bottom than the top of the ladder of prayer, we think that it is no good attempting such a high kind of devotion now, even though some few of us might hope to attain to it hereafter.

But the silent listening of which we are now thinking is not this, but is a very simple thing indeed. It is just what we should do at once if our Lord were to come among us some morning in visible presence. It is the attitude of Mary of Bethany, an entirely natural attitude when once we realize that God is here with us. If our Lord were to come among us visibly, we should suppose that he had come to tell us more about his love and his purposes, more about the kingdom of heaven and the

ways in which it is increased. We should feel that we knew nothing of this yet as we ought to know, but that in him was all the knowledge of it and the love which desired to communicate it to us. We should feel that instinctively, because of what we know about our Lord. And, therefore, as soon as we realized that he was with us, our hearts would of course leap towards him in thanksgiving and praise and adoration, and then we should be intent on listening to him. We should keep as silent as we could, that he might be able to tell us what he wanted us to do in order that we might serve him and co-operate with him better in future.

And our Lord does come among us in a special way every day when we come in silence to wait upon him. He does not appear in visible presence except occasionally, because he wants us to put forth our faith and trust him without seeing him.<sup>1</sup> We all believe he is with us—we have believed it for years; and though the fact that we cannot see him with our eyes makes listening to him much more difficult, it is not at all less necessary. Nor is it so difficult as most people think. We can certainly learn to do it by practice, and to do it for longer periods as time goes on.

Dr. McNeile in his very valuable book, *Self-training in Prayer*,<sup>2</sup> has tried to explain how this listening is to be done.<sup>3</sup>

He says, 'It is doing what our Lord told us to do when he said, "Knock and it shall be opened unto you"—an attitude towards God in which intellectual thought and emotional feeling are kept in abeyance. The will

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter III.

<sup>2</sup> Cambridge, W. Heffer & Sons. Price, 1s. 9d. net.

<sup>3</sup> See the last four chapters.



is exercised in keeping them so, and the love of the whole being is free to unite itself with the love of God.'

Though some of his words suggest the language of the mystics, he is only describing what we should naturally do if we could see our Lord with us. We should then keep our intellectual thought in abeyance, that is, we should concentrate our minds on listening—waiting for what he was going to say, not thinking what it was likely to be or what we ought to answer. And also, we should certainly keep our emotions in abeyance. We should not allow ourselves to be distracted or confused by emotional feelings. We should be so intent on finding out what our Lord wanted to tell us, that all our powers would be concentrated on that.

Imagine ourselves praying in our quiet time. We have come because we want to be in silence with God. We have come for God's sake, not merely our own; and there is our Father, longing with the whole love of God to reveal himself to us, to tell us what he wants us to be and to do, what he wants us to pray for. We know nothing as yet as we ought to know, and he has all these treasures of wisdom to pour out upon us. Is it not, then, a natural attitude for us to adopt—to take advantage of this silence to listen, to give him the opportunity of speaking to us and revealing himself to us, and to exercise our will in the effort to keep ourselves in this listening attitude?

We are not to expect to hear anything at all like words. We may not be conscious that he has revealed himself to us at all. The new knowledge may come through the next book we read, or through some person we talk to—God knows how he can best reveal himself. We have just to listen.

But if we have not been accustomed to do this before, it is undoubtedly a difficult thing to do at first. Some days we shall be able to do it better than others. It is no good trying to keep on listening when that exercise makes us restless. It is better to proceed with the Lord's Prayer. There is such a variety of exercises in this prayer that there is no need for any of us to waste our quiet time. But I am sure that we ought every morning to make the effort, not as though we were going to do an extremely difficult thing, but reflecting simply—here is our Father, his Spirit is within me, what does he want to say to me? Very soon we shall not only be able to listen, but we shall desire to listen for a much longer time.

We are to learn to pray according to our Lord's method in our times of private prayer; but, of course, as we learn to listen better in these times of quiet, then gradually we shall begin all our other prayers by listening, if only for a moment or two; and we shall get into the habit of listening for what God has to say before doing other things. Our frequent habit now probably is to make up our minds about what we are anxious to do, then go to God with our minds full of it, and then, with a comfortable sense that his blessing is upon it, do the thing we had made up our minds to do beforehand. That is not at all like listening. When we listen we do not know beforehand what our Lord is going to say; and when once we have got into the habit of listening, we shall not do things merely because we want to do them, but we shall be giving God day by day an opportunity of showing us what he wants us to do, and we shall become increasingly desirous to find this out before we act.

Therefore, if we have not been in the habit of doing this, we cannot begin to practise it too soon. It is obvious, that for those among us who feel by nature the most impetuous, it is the more necessary to get into this way of becoming quiet so that God's will may be done by us.

Before we leave this first part of the subject, two matters which often cause perplexity ought to be considered.

1. Does it matter whether we lift up our hearts to, and remain in silence before God thought of as our Lord Jesus Christ or as our Father?

Many say that when they think of God, or pray to him, they think of him habitually as our Lord Jesus Christ, and that it is not so real or natural to them to pray to him as 'our Father.' This difficulty will probably disappear as we ponder over our Lord's teaching, and will issue in fuller understanding of God. Christ said, 'I am the way . . . no one cometh unto the Father but by me . . . he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.'<sup>1</sup> He came, he tells us, to manifest the Father: he *is* the manifestation of the Father both in his divine and human nature. Therefore he could have said, He that prayeth to me prayeth to the Father. But most certainly he does not want us to pray to him without remembering this, for the whole desire of his heart is to manifest the Father. Men have, alas! often prayed to him as though he were different from the Father, and as though by prayers to him we could change the Father's attitude towards us. Christ wants us to realize that God is always to be thought of and prayed to as our Father, for that sums up his whole relationship to us.

<sup>1</sup> S. John 14:6-9; cf. 12:44ff.

All God's love for us is described when we say that he is 'our Father.' He could not be anything more to us than a perfect, divine Father, that is, the Giver to us of all we have or can possibly have of life and good. But if we want to know what our Father is like and of what sort his love is, we must look to Jesus, who perfectly manifests him and apart from whom he is not manifested so that men can recognize him.

It is quite right, therefore, for us to think of and pray to our Lord, but it would not be right if we thought that praying to him was different from praying to our Father. It is the same. The only difference there is to us between the Father and the Son in the Trinity is that the Father is God, who would be unknown to us apart from the Son, and the Son is the same God known. If we were to pray to our Lord without remembering his teaching as to his relation to the Father, we should be in danger of thinking of him either as something less than the one eternal God, or as our mediator with the Father in the sense that he is able to change the Father's mind and incline him to deal more mercifully with us than he would apart from Christ's mediation. Therefore we pray to God as 'our Father,' but realizing that he is only known to us as our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore may be addressed by that name.

The Church in all ages, following Christ's example, has in the public services almost without exception taught Christians to pray to God as 'our Father' 'through Jesus Christ our Lord.' But we are equally doing this when we address God directly as Jesus Christ. For it is only through Jesus Christ our Lord that we can either think of, or pray to, God as we should. Yet the Church rightly maintains her language of prayer lest

we should fall into the above mistakes concerning Christ's mediation.

2. What is the relation of God's coming to us in times of silence to his coming in Holy Communion?

The same language can be, and frequently is, used of both comings. But our Lord's teaching conveys a clear distinction between the two. The Holy Communion is God's chief appointed means of conveying to us the risen and ascended life of Christ so that our souls may feed on him as our bodies do on bread, etc. Hence his choice of ordinary food—bread and wine—as the outward sign of this sacrament.

His coming to us in our silence is to reveal to us more and more of what nature that life is and what he wants us to do with it. In silence he can best reveal to us how much he loves us, what his purposes are, and in what ways he wishes us to help him to fulfil them. When we are sufficiently silent at the time of Holy Communion, then the life itself, or he himself, and the revelation of his nature and purpose may come to us both at once. But the opportunity of the Eucharist, though always sufficient to enable us to receive Christ into a heart which desires him, is not as a rule an opportunity for much silence. It is, therefore, of very great encouragement to us to know that the opening of our hearts and minds to make Christ our own can be done not only then but all day long, whenever we can be alone with God, till the time comes again for receiving Holy Communion. The time of the Eucharist, and any time of silent meditation afterwards, can be considered as one long opportunity in which we can receive, that is, make our own the life of Jesus. It is the same with physical food. It does not become part of us, part of

our bodies, when we receive it, but only afterwards as we make it our own gradually through the action of our own powers.

Further, as our Lord said, the words he speaks to us are spirit and life—they are a real communication of himself and his mind to us; therefore there is in our prayer times a real communion of God with us, especially when we are in silence before him, by which we are inspired to make his life our own and live by it. So truly is this the case that people who receive Christ very rarely in Holy Communion, but are practised in this prayer of silence, are often nearer to him than people who receive Holy Communion very often but do not open their hearts to him much in the calm silence of prayer. But on the other hand those who make use of silence frequently, but are not fortified by regular reception of Holy Communion, are very apt to confuse states of their own mind with God himself or his revelations. The ideal condition is one in which the more frequently we receive our Lord in Holy Communion the more we try to commune with him in silent prayer, that we may thus make our own the abundance of life he gives us. Then all our work can be done by this power. 'He that eateth me,' said our Lord, 'he also shall live because of me.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. John 6:57.



## CHAPTER VI

### PRAYING AFTER THE MANNER OF THE LORD'S PRAYER (continued)

I suggest that we should begin our prayer each day in the same way, in the manner described in the last chapter, that is, by lifting up our hearts to our Father 'in secret,' praising him for his fatherly love, and then putting ourselves into a quiet listening attitude, that he may be able to open his mind to us and reveal his purposes.

But from that point onwards—for praying the rest of the Lord's Prayer—I suggest that we have a different subject or set of subjects for each day. Our list of subjects should be made carefully and noted down clearly, so that when our precious quiet time comes we do not have to waste any of it in thinking what to pray about. Nor should we trust to getting inspiration at the moment.<sup>1</sup> We ought to expect that God will be able to perform his will most effectively in and through us when we have prepared as carefully as possible for his coming.

In making our list of subjects we should aim at taking as wide a range as possible lest our sympathies should be narrowed to a small circle and our powers of loving consequently decreased. There is, of course, a family circle, so to speak, for each of us, people for whom we ought to pray every day—no one can tell another how big that should be. But beyond that, our hearts and minds should range over a wide area, since we are

<sup>1</sup> But see below, p. 72f.

members of Christ's Catholic Church, which has been commanded to make disciples of all nations.

The following are some examples of how the different clauses in the Lord's Prayer may be prayed for different subjects. They are given in an expanded form. But it is not intended to indicate that we should necessarily pray thus with many words, but rather to give examples of the mental process involved in such use of the Lord's Prayer, which will probably require less and less words as we get more accustomed to it.<sup>1</sup>

Suppose our subject for the day is *Sinners*, especially the worst, and that we are in communion with our Father; have been thanking and worshipping and listening as long as possible to hear whatever he desires to say. We should then go on to the first petition, *Hallowed be thy name*. This means, May thy character be better known: mayst thou be adored and believed in as thou art—as thou hast been manifested in Jesus Christ. May the old misunderstandings as to thy character and purposes cease. May we all realize more clearly that thy patience, forbearance, holiness, and self-giving love are unlimited. We should, therefore, pray for the sinners in some such way as this: May they come to know thy love; may those who feel degraded and outcast and in despair, be enabled somehow or by someone to understand that thou hast not cast them off and never wilt—that thou art waiting and longing for them to come back to thee; may the careless and ungodly ones come to realize thy holiness and love, and so repent and love thee.

We go on to pray *Thy Kingdom come*.

<sup>1</sup> See below Chap. VII.

God's kingdom means for us the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of his love. It is not to be thought of merely as an extension of the external borders of Christ's Church, but always as the increase of his dominion, of his reign in the hearts of men.

As we pray for the Sinners, thinking perhaps of the worst of them, the most hardened or degraded, we should try to picture the difference it would make if Christ did reign in their hearts. We could think of the bad women in the Gospels, who were wholly transformed when Christ came into and lived in their hearts—the 'woman who was a sinner', or S. Mary Magdalene. Then we should pray with great desire that Jesus may find an entrance into sinners' hearts, that we may make one for him by our prayers. Or we could think of the Prodigal Son in the parable—of the father's welcome to him, how he opened his home to him and gave him the best he had, and of the wonderful change wrought in the young man who had lived in such deep degradation. And then we should pray very earnestly for the young men who are going after their lusts and forgetting all about God, that his kingdom may come in their hearts—that something may happen to turn them to him—that they may let our Lord in and be transformed by him.

Then we could go on, if there is time, to think of other classes of sinners, always trying to picture the transformation which Christ's reign in their hearts would effect. Thus our love for Christ and desire that sinners should be transformed by him would get so strong in time, that we should pray with all our hearts, Thy kingdom come in these sinners and in me, the sinner: and so be able to effect wonders.

*Thy will be done* follows. That is, May the sinners

who are in my heart come, through Christ's power in them to do thy will instead of following their own desires. We can think of them as going about the world doing good and helping men to God instead of being, as they used to be, tempters of men and women, doing harm, sowing seeds of evil in the hearts of others. Then we should pray earnestly, especially for any who we know are doing great harm, that their wills may be turned in the opposite direction, towards God and all that is good. Or we can try to think of what God's will for them is, though it is beyond all our thinking: how glorious he wants to make them; how powerful, as instruments of good; how loving and tender and patient, as saviours of other sinners who have fallen as they fell; and pray, Thy will for them be done, O Father; thy will, who lovest them with an everlasting love, who hast in all ages lifted men and women from the mire and set them among the princes in thy kingdom.

And then we come to the last part of the Lord's Prayer, which is meant to be prayed as a means of fulfilling the first part; that is to say, our Lord does not teach us to pray it merely for the satisfying of the needs of our fellow men, but that God's name may be hallowed, his kingdom come, his will be done. He wants men to become not merely saved but instruments for the spreading of his kingdom.

*Give us this day our daily bread* (or, 'our bread for the coming day', R.V.M.). This is a comprehensive prayer for the supply of all the food and sustenance that we need in our bodies and souls for doing God's will. It can be a prayer for the supply of food for the body for those who have not enough, or of any other physical necessities, not merely that they may be filled, but

chiefly that they may become more effective workers for God. It is, above all, a prayer for the Bread of Life which God supplies chiefly through the holy sacrament of the altar; a prayer that this sacrament may be better understood, more reverently and lovingly received and by many more people; that the knowledge and use of it may become universal among Christians, so that they more and more live by Christ's life and therefore spread his kingdom on the earth. The prayer, therefore, would mean in this case. Give the different classes of sinners strength to free themselves from their old bad habits; strength to persevere in the new ways which Christ is showing them. Give them the Bread of Life.

*Forgive us our trespasses.* We shall pray this in like manner: Our sins and sinful habits are hindering us greatly in thy service. Thou canst not use us if we are bent on sinning, on living for ourselves, therefore heal our wounds and theirs, O Lord, especially . . . , that we all may be strong for thy service. Forgive the sins of all for whom we have been praying, that through them thy holy name may be glorified and thy blessed kingdom enlarged.

*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* Let us, let them, not be drawn away from thy path back into the old attractive ways. Let us not fall into the snares that are set for us on all sides; deliver them and us from the attractions of the world, the flesh, and the devil, that we may all walk in thy paths, fulfil thy will, and glorify thy holy name; especially we pray this for . . . .

The above may suffice as an example of one day's prayer after the manner of the Lord's Prayer; I suggest

that the same or a similar plan should be followed every day in the week, with a fresh subject for each day.

For instance, suppose we are praying for the *children* who are growing up in these difficult days—the children whose task it will be to carry out for mankind the lessons God taught us through the war: we should think of our Lord's love for them, as the Gospels show it, and how strong and beautiful their lives will be if they let him into their hearts now, that he may reign there always: also of their temptations. We shall think of the multitudes of children who are taught about, and led into, evil when their minds are in the most impressionable condition, so that evil imaginations are only with great difficulty eradicated afterwards; and of what would happen if, instead of this, their minds were filled with thoughts of Jesus Christ and his love and beauty. And we shall pray from our hearts, Lord, may they know thee as thou art, and understand how thou lovest them; may thy kingdom come in them; may they let thee guide their lives. Let them not fall into the snares of the enemy, but keep them pure and unselfish, safe from the evil one, that when they grow up they may be strong and holy instruments, through whom thy kingdom may come and thy will be done in all the different countries.

Or, suppose we are praying for *the Church*. And, first, for *the bishops*: May thy name be hallowed by them, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in and through them.

We think of the bishops as being called to be the chief pastors of Christ's flock. We should think of Christ as being the Good Shepherd, *the* Pastor, and we should pray that he may come more and more into their hearts



to take possession of them. Thou hast called them to be chief pastors of thy flock; may thy spirit, thy love, the love of the Good Shepherd, more and more fill their hearts, so that they only have one desire, to do the work of the Chief Pastor. And, as we think of the amount of business they have to engage in, we should pray for them most earnestly: Lord, may they abide in thee; may this multitude of things not distract them from thee and from their proper work. Mayst thou reign in them more and more, so that they too may become good shepherds. May their whole hearts be filled as thine is, with love for the poor, the ignorant, the outcast, the heathen, the sinful, the lost. May they be impelled by thy love to give themselves wholly to their flock, to seek those who have gone astray. Or, May they be filled with thy wisdom, so that they may devise means whereby the other sheep outside may be brought in. May they have thy mind, the mind of the Good Shepherd, and his love. And then we shall naturally think of the bishops with whom we are specially connected.

Then, probably, we go on to *the priests*. We ought to know by this time how much they want praying for, that they too may be so filled with Christ's love that they may become true priests, doing what he wants done, not what they want done. May they in thy strength tend and feed thy sheep. May thy spirit be theirs. May they be gentle with all men. Think of those who are engaged in controversies, and pray that Christ may come and reign in them altogether, so that they seek nothing but to win people to Christ; not to support their own point of view, not to set themselves up in any way, but simply to be shepherds like Christ.

Perhaps the language of S. Paul in the Pastoral Epistles will come into our mind, in which he says what the life of a priest ought to be like. *May* all whom thou art calling to go anywhere go, whatever it costs them. *May* they have simply one desire, thy desire that thy Kingdom may come. Come and fill them, and drive out from their hearts all the selfishness that thou findest there.

And then we should of course especially pray for the priests with whom we are in any way connected; and no doubt, as we are praying thus and lifting up our hearts with great desire that Christ should reign in them, he will suggest to us those priests for whom he especially desires our prayers at that time.

Or, suppose the subject is *those in sorrow or suffering of any kind . . .* Then *Hallowed be thy name* will mean, *May* these sufferers come to know thee better as thou art. *May* they not think thee hard and cruel. *May* all sufferers who misunderstand thee now come to know the truth about thy character; may they realize that thou dost suffer in all their sufferings, because thou art always at work to bring good and joy out of the harm and sorrow that man causes. *May* all sufferers, especially . . . turn to thee and so find out about thy love. *Thy kingdom come* in these sufferers, that is, *Mayst* thou, living in them, teach and enable them to bear suffering as thou didst bear it, offering themselves to thee to bear as much of the burden of suffering humanity as thou wilt enable them to bear, in order that it may be conquered and done away. *Thy will be done* in and through them, that is, *May* they become thus through thy power sharers in thy work of redemption—instruments through whom mankind may be

purified from selfishness and made holy and loving. *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,* that is, Let them not fall into temptations to be resentful or bitter because they have to suffer; but deliver them from all hardness of heart, that they may be able to know thy character and to serve thee in loving faithfulness.

Or, to take one more example, suppose we are praying for *the unity of Christendom*, we should try to think what the Church's power and beauty would be like if all Christians lived in one great harmony. Then *Hallowed be thy name* might be, May thy whole Church come to know thee and understand *thy* unity better; may we all quickly approach the time when we can proclaim it as one body; may the divisions of the Church which cause thy name to be dishonoured cease. *Thy kingdom come*, that is, May thy spirit reign in the hearts of men and women in all parts of the Church, so that we all become one in thee, become perfected into one, so that the world may believe in thee and Christ whom thou hast sent. *Forgive us our trespasses*, our quarrels, our uncharitableness, our arrogance, our prejudice—all that hinders us from godly union and concord.

The above illustrations give some idea of how the Lord's Prayer may be prayed; but a very inadequate one. For they do not describe the enthusiasm and the glowing desire which is begotten in us as we become accustomed to this method of prayer; as we contemplate day by day God's name, that is, his character, himself, the glories of his kingdom, the perfection of his loving will; as the longing increases in us that those who are nearest to us, and all others for whom we pray, in

this world or the next, may know God better, may be more filled with his love, and may become more perfect instruments of his will.

It is surely impossible to pray thus day by day without quickly increasing in love to God and our fellow-men. Our own selfish desires or interests must pale before the glories of God we are contemplating and the desires we are uttering that he may come in his kingdom.

## CHAPTER VII

### DIFFICULTIES CONSIDERED

THE plan which has been suggested in Chapters V and VI for praying after the manner of the Lord's Prayer will seem strange to many, and puzzling as not fitting in with the ways in which they have been accustomed to pray, especially in their quiet meditation time. It is hoped that the following considerations will remove difficulties and show more clearly the purpose and benefit of such a method of prayer.

1. *It will seem to many to be much too long and comprehensive for the amount of quiet time they are likely to get during the day.*

It is certainly true that the more we become habituated to pouring out our hearts in this way to God in prayer, the less we are able to pray in words for so many classes of people during our quiet time on any one morning. But the object of this plan is not that we should say a great many prayers, but that we should pray after Christ's method with a definite object for each day. And most people have to learn to do this

by praying in words in some such way as has been suggested. As we become more able to do it, the number of our articulate prayers becomes less; for instance, the whole of the last part of the Lord's Prayer, from 'Give us this day our daily bread' to the end, might not as a rule be said at all in words, or it might all be included in 'Give us this day our daily bread,' or it might all be implied in our prayers for the hallowing of God's name, the coming of his kingdom, the doing of his will. Again, these three main objects of our prayer will soon become in our minds practically one object—God's glory. Later on still, we may hope, our minds and hearts will have become so habituated to prayer in accordance with our Lord's method that we shall pray the whole Lord's Prayer for any given object with almost no uttered words at all. When there is an intense desire in our hearts that, for instance, the Church should be in character and work what he wishes it to be, then all the separate needs of different ranks and classes or individuals in it which are in our hearts would be lifted up to God with very few uttered words. We shall gradually learn how to remain with God, pouring out our hearts' desire for the Church, or for the unity of Christendom, for the conversion of the heathen, for the union of labour and capital in love, or whatever our subject is, that God's glory may be increased and *his* needs fulfilled in these various ways, and it may be we shall scarcely be conscious that we are uttering words of prayer at all. But we cannot expect to arrive at such a condition as this until we have learnt by a long series of persevering efforts, such as those indicated above, to pray in the way our Lord has shown us.

It will, however, no doubt sometimes, perhaps

frequently, happen to some, even though they have not long been trying to pray in this way, that they will be able to pour out their hearts' desire for God's glory without any words. Their hearts may be too full for words, as, for instance, if they are greatly desiring that some particular evil may be rooted out, or some new work for God's kingdom prospered, or when their hearts are filled with some great sorrow.

Further, we should bear in mind that every day as we are learning by slow degrees to pray as Christ does, we must be ready to abandon the plan we have made at any point if our Lord takes hold of us and shows us that he wants us to do so. For instance, suppose that one morning we are intent on listening in silence for whatever God may wish to say, and he enables us to go on doing so, we ought to go on as long as we can, even though we come to the end of our prayer time without having prayed about the day's subject at all. Or if we have begun some subject and our hearts and minds are filled with the desire 'Hallowed be thy name', and Christ's Spirit enables us to go on fervently pouring out our love to him in this way, we ought to go on, for he has taken hold of us and is directing us. There will, perhaps, be time during the rest of the day to finish what we wanted to pray about, but even if this is not so, we are praying according to God's will—we are praying, so to speak, the whole Lord's Prayer while we remain, if God so directs, consciously praying only one clause of it. For our whole prayer is ideally one: it is simply the gift of ourselves to God for the fulfilling of his holy and loving will. It is for us to make a definite plan for every day, and to keep to it, unless



God indicates at any part of it that he wishes us for the present to abandon it.

One main advantage of making a plan such as I have suggested, which includes a large variety of subjects, is that it enables us to pray without wasting our quiet time or letting our thoughts wander away from God. For it surely must be the case that (unless we are so tired or ill any day that we ought to rest rather than try to pray) with such a variety of subjects, one or more of them will always be found to engage and occupy our attention and evoke desire from our hearts.

It is right, then, that in carrying out the plan we have made each day we should—

(a) So leave ourselves in God's hand that we are ready to abandon any part of it in obedience to his inspirations;

(b) Not try to go on praying that part of it which does not evoke any enthusiasm from us that day, but leave it and go on till we find one that does;

(c) Give ourselves eagerly to God's embrace whenever he suddenly takes hold of us to lift our souls into closer union with himself, and remain with our attention fixed wholly on him, not allowing it to be diverted from him by any thought of self.

## *2. The relation of Bible study and Meditation to this prayer.*

Prayer such as is here recommended presupposes Bible study and meditation: not merely that there has been a good deal of it in the past, but that we are engaged in it in the present so far as we get opportunity. Critical Bible study, especially of the New Testament, is necessary that we may understand better what our Lord and his Apostles actually said, and the meaning of

their words. Meditation, which is devotional study of the Bible and of the truths of the Christian faith, is necessary that we may discover more completely what God's character is and what his will is in the present for us and our fellow-men.

But this twofold study, let us bear in mind, necessary as it is, is not prayer, though it is often represented in books of devotion to be so. Its main use is to make us desire to pray and to enable us to do so more intelligently.

It will be observed in most schemes of Meditation that we are recommended to take a subject, think of two or three points of it, and then at the end pray in accordance with what we have been thinking. Thus many people get the impression that most of their quiet prayer time should be spent in devotional study or thinking, with a little prayer at the end. And it has probably happened to many of us who have tried to follow such schemes of Meditation, that though we have often been desirous to get on to the praying part, we have not done so because we supposed it was right to spend most of our time in thinking. This, however, is a great mistake. Meditation is meant to incite us to prayer; it is not itself prayer; and if we can spend all our prayer time in actually praying, it is much better that we should do so, instead of spending most of it in climbing laboriously up the ladder to prayer which, however necessary it may once have been, is not necessary now.

To point this out is not to underestimate the value of Bible study or of patient, careful thought about the truths of Christ's religion. It is most important that our minds should be as well furnished as possible, and that they should increase as time goes on in the power of thinking about and grasping Christian truth. Unless

we do our best with our minds according to the opportunity God gives us, we have no right to expect that we shall be able to obey his call to us to help others to believe in and understand him. On the other hand, *we ought most certainly to aim every day at spending as much of our quiet time as possible in prayer, that is, in actual conscious communion with God.* Nothing is so important as this. *We can never pray too much, if we pray according to our Lord's method.* We need not be in the least afraid of, or on our guard against, any temptation to do so. The most constant and dangerous temptations of our lives are to pray too little and to think it right to do so. We are very rarely free from them, and it will always require all the will-power we possess to resist them. It was a favourite maxim with the mystics that 'nothing is lost in God'. God is best able to impart to us knowledge of his own nature and purposes, as well as the power to do his will, when we are actually engaged with all our powers in praying—in adoring, in silent listening, or in prayers that his will may be done. For God is love, and can, therefore, best reveal himself to men when they are actually engaged in loving. But we are never engaged in loving God and our fellow-men so strenuously as when we are pouring out our hearts in prayer after our Lord's model. Our minds and hearts are then in the most receptive condition into which our wills can bring them in this life. To bear this in mind is to have constantly with us a singularly effective weapon for warding off the attacks of temptations which aim at maiming or ruining our life of communion with God, upon which all our power as instruments of Christ depends.

3. *The relation of this method of prayer to the teaching of the great Christian mystics.*

The Lord's Prayer, as we have tried to show, was given as a means of training his disciples to open their hearts to God and their fellow-men, and keep the two commandments of the Christian law together. It was to be a combination of what we usually speak of as contemplation and intercession.

Christ's teaching about prayer coincides with that of his life and teaching in general. He came to do his Father's will, and that will as it has been revealed to us by him is the salvation of mankind. His contemplation of his Father's love and purpose, his silent listening to his Father's voice, was all with a view to his work for and among men. We have thought in Chapter I of the great pains he took all through his life to keep in constant communion with his Father: this was that he might always work for mankind in his Father's way, and never in his own. The two cannot be separated in his life: his work for men is a necessary and integral part of his devotion to his Father. And therefore, since his main work for men was done through prayer, his prayer must have been a constant combination of what we are apt to think of separately as contemplation and intercession.

He sends us to carry on the work for which he was sent: to manifest the same kind of devotion to God that his life manifested. The meaning of our life here is not merely that we should be saved but that we should be saviours—sharers in Christ's redeeming work. For us, therefore, as for him, contemplation of God and listening in silence for his voice are in order that we may the more effectively help him to fulfil his pur-

pose for mankind: therefore also our highest kind of prayer is that whereby we do thus help him. To be absorbed in God is not to be in a condition of passive inactivity, but to be in the highest condition of activity, for God's sake and man's, of which our nature is capable; for it is to have our minds and hearts absorbed in God's interests and desires as he has revealed them to us. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.'<sup>1</sup> His call to us is to share in this work—the work of man's redemption—till the whole race is won. And since in our case, as in Christ's, the best and most fruitful work for God and man is done through prayer, the highest kind of prayer for us, as for him, is one in which we contemplate, adore, and praise God for what he is and at the same time strive with all our might that our fellow-men may know and love him and do his will, and so satisfy his longing desire for them: in other words, prayer which is after the manner of the Lord's Prayer.

Such prayer, we can well understand, if it is persevered in, would be the destruction of that selfishness which we all feel to be our greatest hindrance in our work for Christ. It would seem, then, that the more we pray after this manner, the more use we shall be to God and our fellow-men.

But here we meet with a difficulty that ought to be faced. It is urged by many that the history of Christian mysticism does not show that this is so; they say much of it supports their contention that to spend a great deal of time in prayer produces selfishness, an inordinate desire for one's own joy or exaltation at the

<sup>1</sup> S. John 5:17.

expense of the people who need help. And it must be admitted that they have some excuse for falling into this error, though error it certainly is.

It is the case that some of the teaching of Christian mystics in the middle ages concerning contemplation, absorption in God, stillness, inactivity, as being the highest results of prayer, was derived, not from Christ's teaching, but from Oriental and non-Christian philosophy, which was mistakenly supposed to come from high Christian sources, and was therefore allowed to gain a firm foothold within the Church.<sup>1</sup> Part of this philosophy, as those who have lived long in India can well understand, is largely the result of life in tropical and enervating climates. In such a climate it is far more delightful to most people to do nothing than to be active, and their highest idea of bliss and salvation naturally and almost inevitably, when they are without Christ's revelation, tends to become one of complete inactivity, in which one's own personality disappears altogether and is absorbed in God as a drop of ink in an ocean. We must, then, make all due allowance for the fact that the Christian Church allowed this false philosophy to enter into her mind from the East and to pervert her mysticism to some extent during several ages.

Also mystics of the mediæval Church were sometimes deceived by many illusions which modern discoveries about man's nature, especially in psychology, have

<sup>1</sup> This was introduced chiefly through the writings of the pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, an unknown writer of the fifth century (probably), who formed a system which combined Christian, Greek, Oriental and Jewish elements; but was supposed by the Church to have been the convert of S. Paul mentioned in Acts 17: 34, whose writings were, therefore, received as having almost as much authority as those of S. Paul himself.



removed. For instance, it was then supposed that if a person had frequent trances, he must be in a very high spiritual condition; if he or she uttered words in such trances, they were supposed to come straight from God; they are quoted by some writers as sayings of the Holy Ghost. Again, if a person's body was sometimes seen to be raised above the ground during prayer, it was supposed that the only way of accounting for this wonder was that he was filled with some mighty power of the Spirit, and must therefore be already almost a perfect saint. It followed, then, that any systems of prayer which tended to produce these and such-like phenomena were very eagerly sought after. Men and women who were capable of such abnormal conditions were earnestly questioned as to how it came about—what their system of prayer was. And the teaching which was given in response was embraced without question. The fact that it differed greatly from our Lord's was not considered. It was sufficient that it produced such wonderful results. We cannot be surprised at this, nor can we blame those who thus thought. They quite naturally argued that since these phenomena were undoubtedly signs of great sanctity and were produced by certain systems of prayer, then it must be our Lord's will that such systems should be followed by all who had sufficient opportunity, courage, and resolution to persevere in them.

But it will be decidedly wrong if *we* allow our minds to be thus diverted from our Lord's method of prayer. For we know, as they could not know, that the above or similar physical phenomena are not necessarily signs of sanctity at all. They are very frequently manifested by mediums and others who have the power of getting

into what we have learnt to call subconscious states, but who are not necessarily holy, and in many cases are conspicuously the reverse. Trances, automatic speaking and writing in subconscious states, levitation, and other still more wonderful phenomena, all of which would have been accounted in the Middle Ages sure signs of sanctity, are by no means unknown in these days; and it is well known now that they have no necessary connection at all with holiness of life; also that they can be produced, as they frequently are in Hinduism, by systems of mental and physical training which have nothing whatever to do with prayer. It is, perhaps, possible for most of us with practice to hypnotize ourselves to such an extent that similar phenomena might result; and, be it observed, we might do this, as no doubt many Christian mystics did, by gazing at a crucifix while we were praying, or by abstracting our mind from all objects of thought in some other way during prayer time, so that we passed or partly passed into a subconscious state, in which we experienced wonderful sensations of joy and light or burning of the heart. In such cases, even in these days, it would be difficult not to think that these were direct results of prayer, and very difficult not to go on trying to produce them. We should also no doubt be greatly tempted to think that we had risen to a height of spirituality to which few attain in this life.

It is therefore true that mediæval mysticism sometimes produced systems of prayer which in themselves tended to increase self-love (though of a refined kind) rather than the love of Christ, by which he emptied himself for the sake of his Father and his fellow-men; and to induce people to lead lives which, however heroic and wonderful they may have seemed, cannot

be said to be a following of the life Christ lived on earth and set before us all as our supreme example.

It may be that some of us, either because we accepted false teaching as true, or mistook the meaning of great mystical writers, have tried to follow certain systems of prayer, with the result that our thoughts and aims became more centred in ourselves than ever; that we were constantly on the look out for indications that we were getting on—rising into a higher plane.

Let me describe what I know is no uncommon experience. A man begins with Meditation according to some approved method. After a time he thinks that he has got to such a point that he can leave it and proceed to a higher kind of prayer. He feels himself, though he would not like to confess it, greatly superior to those who have not arrived so high. He is sure, because the books say so, that if he can persevere on this new stage he will at last reach a higher one—he will arrive at Contemplation, and later on still, if he is very heroic, at the Prayer of Silence or of Union, in which he will be oblivious of all else except himself and God. He often wonders what he could do to get more quickly to a higher stage than the one he has reached: would a little scourging or more fasting hasten matters? He tries both, perhaps, and is secretly a little proud of himself for doing it. He would like others to know he was doing it, though he pretends he would not. He has his ups and downs: sometimes he thinks he is getting on, sometimes that he is not. In one of his bad times he perhaps tries a new system, that of another mystic, which seems for a time a great success, but fails later on. Then he tries a combination of systems. Anything to get on. He dreads sliding back to a lower

level again and thereby wasting all the trouble he has taken to raise himself to a high spiritual condition, high above the great majority of his fellow-men. And then, perhaps, one day, while he is absorbed in his own 'ascent of Carmel' or 'ladder of prayer', he discovers—God having mercy on him—that in the most Christ-like virtues he is greatly surpassed by very many ordinary people who have never heard of the various steps of prayer at all; that, whereas they are willing to sacrifice themselves even to the giving up of their lives for their fellow-men, he is absorbed in himself and in his own progress; whereas they think little of themselves and scarcely at all of the beautiful things they are doing, he has been thinking very highly and much of himself and despising in his heart those who, like these people, were not trying to be spiritual as he was: whereas they who, perhaps, seemed to be last are really among the first, he who thought himself among the first is really among the least Christ-like, the least loving. It is probable that many thousands of people who thought they were getting on in a life of prayer learnt through the War precisely the same kind of lesson.

Even if we have had no such experience as the above, we cannot help knowing that many religious people—people who pray a good deal—are harder with sinners, more uncharitable, more intolerant with those whose religious opinions differ from their own, than many who scarcely pray at all, or who have even long ago given up prayer. It is not at all an uncommon experience to find people who are not religious exhibiting the Christian virtues of self-sacrifice, humility, kindness, forbearance, and joyfulness to a far greater extent than their neighbours who are religious. This can only be because these

religious people pray wrongly—in such a way as to rivet their attention on themselves so that they to a great extent shut their hearts to others. If this is the case, then, it may be that the more they pray the narrower, the more intolerant, the more self-centred they become.

But while it is right to criticize and avoid certain systems of prayer which have been handed down by mystics, in so far as they are not in agreement with the method given by our Lord himself, it would be very wrong indeed to deny or minimize the holiness of the great mediæval Christian mystics. They were indeed saints as the Church calls them. Their lives afford examples which have never been more needed than they are in this age. They were single-hearted men and women whose one supreme desire was to do God's will. Also they saw, what we too *must* see if we are to fulfil God's will, that in order to fulfil it a life of close habitual communion with him is an absolute necessity. And to attain to such a life they made and persevered in efforts which seem to most of us impossibly heroic. They were no doubt often in danger of being diverted from an imitation of Christ's life into one of entire seclusion—of complete withdrawal, so far as was possible, from the lives and interests of their fellow-men. This danger arose partly, as we have thought, from false, un-Christian philosophy which was admitted into the Church as Christian and true, but chiefly from the impossibility of living a religious life in the midst of society as it then was. We should always bear in mind when we criticize the withdrawal of so many hundreds of men and women from the world into strictly enclosed convents, that during some ages it was practically impossible to live a life

near to God in the world, and that therefore many were probably right in thinking that our Lord was calling them out of it, at any rate for long periods, that they might thus serve the world better.

Let us remember also that, in the case of many of the greatest saints and mystics, our Lord, whose will they were always ready to obey, did not allow them to live apart from their fellows as they desired, but called them to lives of active love among men. Such saints, for example, as S. Bernard, S. Francis of Assisi, S. Catherine of Siena, all desired greatly to live lives of seclusion, of 'pure contemplation,' but actually led lives, in obedience to Christ's call, which so closely resembled his that, like the Apostles, they were able to turn the world of their day upside down, and have afforded examples which are a never-failing source of inspiration and strength to the Christian Church everywhere; while such mystics as S. Teresa and S. John of the Cross, though they lived in a strictly enclosed religious order, were called down from their 'mounts of contemplation' into very busy lives of active service. Both S. Catherine of Siena and S. Teresa complain bitterly of certain other mystics of their day who would not leave their cell and their contemplation to serve their fellow-men, for fear of imperilling their own salvation.

Ours is a danger of an opposite kind. We are bent on active service, but we are all in great danger of being so absorbed in it and in our plans for it as to lose sight of our Lord: so that our meat is not like his, to do the will of him that sent him and to accomplish his work, but to carry out our own plans and accomplish our own work. And in view of our Lord's teaching, especially in S. John 15, which we considered before,



our danger is seen to be by far the greater of the two. We dwelt upon this at length in Chapter I, so there is no need to say more about it now.

Moreover, a closer study of the treatises on prayer which have been written by the greatest of the mystics will probably convince us that there is no contradiction between the states of prayer they describe and our Lord's method of prayer as we have tried to set it forth. The fact is that in most cases, they begin where this little book leaves off, and describe supernatural conditions into which our Lord was able to lead those who had learned through praying in his Name to give themselves wholly to him for his service. They did not seek these conditions; they only sought to do God's will and they all confess with one consent that the states of union with him which they try to describe are entirely his work, not theirs. Their writings are inspiring inasmuch as they show us what God can do in and through those who whole-heartedly love him. If we use them to learn how we can gain similar experiences, they will be nothing but a snare to us. For we are called not to aim at being exalted, but at being sincere servants of God and of all men for his sake. The object of all prayer is this.

The example of these great and glorious saints who lived with God, and through whom he was able to do such great things for the world, shows most plainly that Christ's disciples need a system of prayer which on the one hand leads them into a life of close and habitual communion with God, and on the other leads them at the same time into one of strenuous active endeavour for the salvation of their fellow-men; a system which fills their heart with the love of God and man, and so destroys all wrong self-love from within them.

Let us consider once more, in conclusion, how prayer after the manner of the Lord's Prayer does all this for those who are in earnest about it.

For the sake of clearness let us consider this under three heads. Habitual prayer of this kind is the most effective means we possess for gaining and increasing in the true love (i) of God, (ii) of our neighbour, (iii) of ourselves, that is, for fulfilling the whole Christian law.<sup>1</sup>

*1. By it our love for God is quickly increased and purified.*

For think what we do when we pray after our Lord's manner. We lift up our hearts to God our Father, we contemplate his name, that is, his character—his glory as it is revealed in Christ; his kingdom—the entrancing beauty of it—the transformation which Christ effects when he is allowed to reign in men's hearts; his will, that is, himself willing always and for all, the perfection of good, of life, and beatitude. As our hearts and minds are thus employed, we needs must love and thank and adore him, our divine Father known in Jesus Christ. But what does loving him mean? Not merely enjoying the thought of his beauty or the sense of his presence, but serving him, trying to fulfil his desires—to satisfy the longings of his heart. This chiefly means for us praying (and, of course, striving in all other possible ways as well as in this chief way) that his name may be hallowed—that he may be known upon earth by those who know him not, and known and revered

<sup>1</sup> Our power to love comes to us directly from Christ, who is the only source of it (see 1 S. John 4:7-19). It comes to us chiefly through the sacraments of his Church, especially the Holy Eucharist, in which we feed on his life, the life of him who is eternally engaged in loving perfectly. We are here considering what is necessary on *our part* so that we may make this life our own and live by it.

more truly by those who know him already; that knowing this glorious character they may love him and so let Christ reign in their hearts, that is, that his kingdom may come. I thirst, says Christ, for all the people in whom I do not yet reign. We, knowing this and loving him, must try to quench his thirst; that his will may be done—that the desire of his heart to destroy sin, disease, suffering and death, and to fill his whole universe with his love, may be satisfied.

All this is far from being mere passive enjoyment of our Beloved; it is the most strenuous work on his behalf of which we are capable in this life. It is the best offering of love we can make.

No one can pray like this earnestly day by day without quickly increasing in love for God and in the desire to embrace all opportunities for serving him.

2. *By it our love for our neighbour is also quickly increased and purified.*

For when we pray for the fulfilment of the desires of God's heart, we are at the same time necessarily praying for our fellow-men. Our love for our neighbour, if it is true love, is, as Christ said it was, 'like unto' our love for God. For instance, to pray that God's name may be hallowed is to pray that it may be hallowed by our fellow-men—'in earth as it is in heaven'—that is, that he may be known and revered by people who know him imperfectly or not at all. To pray 'Thy kingdom come' is to pray for him and them at the same time—for the satisfaction of his longing and for their salvation. To pray 'Thy will be done' is to pray that men may do it and be transformed by doing it; praying thus we are loving God and our fellow-men by the same act of love. When we pray that our

fellow-men may be strengthened, forgiven, guided, that they may do God's will and advance his kingdom, we are making direct acts of love for God and at the same time for our neighbour. Prayer, in fact, for the increase of God's glory which is not also a prayer for men is meaningless; it is not prayer which helps God, however much sensible pleasure it may at times give us.

And the fact that we pray to *our* Father constantly reminds us that we are members of his family, one with all the other members, and that we are all *sent* by our Father to do what we can, so that those who are at present outside the family may be brought in.

*3. It is the chief means by which our love for ourselves becomes purified and true.*

For as through praying the Lord's Prayer our hearts become more and more filled with the desire that God's will may be done, we cannot but pray and desire at the same time that we ourselves may do it and help others to do it. We come to regard ourselves in the right light as instruments for the spreading of Christ's kingdom, and to desire that we may become more fit to be so. We are tempted constantly to many different kinds of wrong self-love. This is the way to the only true kind, to the desire and prayer that we, as well as the others for whom we pray, may be filled with God's life, for his sake, so that we may be able to help people to him. The desires for selfish gratification which are constantly in our lower nature thus gradually become swallowed up in the great desire, which through our prayer is ever becoming more absorbing, for God's increase of glory, that is, that the kingdom of the world may become as quickly as possible the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

The effect which this method of prayer has on those who pursue it perseveringly may be described by the following image. It causes our hearts to glow with love for God, and therefore for our fellow-men, as coals glow in a censer. Hence whatever happens throughout the day, that is to say, all opportunities of serving God by prayer or other work, are like so many grains of incense which are dropped into a glowing censer and at once go up in a sweet-smelling cloud: they are received into a heart which is glowing with love for God, and therefore they go up to him as an acceptable offering. All the works we do thus become like prayers. Our different activities, instead of distracting our minds and wearing out our hearts, as they do if we live without prayer, ascend to God and become an offering which he can accept and use wonderfully—a real part of the offering of Christ.

The one thing necessary, therefore, for us is to take care that our hearts *are* like a glowing censer. This means, for all of us whose time is at our own disposal, that we must cause them to glow through praying in quiet after our Lord's method, before we begin the other work of the day; must at intervals during the day fan the coals by more prayer if times of quiet can be obtained, and by trying to keep Christ in our mind habitually by words of prayer darted up to him in the midst of our work, lest the glow die out; and in the evening and again at night lift up our hearts to our Father so that the work of the day may be offered to him, and that all which happens to us in the night, of which we are not conscious, may also fall, like the grains of incense, into hearts which are aglow, and so

ascend to God as offerings for the accomplishment of his purposes.

I would earnestly beg those who are conscious that their method of prayer is haphazard or not in accordance with our Lord's, to adopt and persevere in his method in some such way as has been suggested, giving to it as much time, especially in the early morning, as they can give. They will then, I am confident, come to know by their own experience sooner or later, according to the strength of their perseverance, why Christ taught his disciples this method of prayer. They will come to understand that it was the method he himself used, and is the method which enables us far more effectively than any other to keep the two commandments of the Christian law in which all God's commandments to us are summed up, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.' To keep this law of love perfectly is that for which God created us and has redeemed us. When we do it perfectly and all our selfishness has gone, he will see in us of the travail of his soul and will be satisfied, and we shall have attained to our perfect beatitude—the vision of him as he is.<sup>1</sup>

To which glorious consummation may he bring us at last through the merits of our all-loving, almighty, and all-merciful Saviour!

<sup>1</sup> 1 S. John 3:2.